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THE

WORKS

OF

CHARLES FOLLEN,

WITH A

MEMOIR OF HIS LIFE.

IN FIVE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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SERMON I.

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2 Timothy i. 10.

"Our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."

These words of the Apostle, addressed to his disciple Timothy, contain the simple and solemn declaration, that our Saviour, Jesus Christ, has shown the importance of death, and has revealed immortal life through his doctrine. The text says, Jesus hath "abolished" death; that is, he has shown, that the fear of death is groundless, because death is not, what it seems to be, the end of human existence. In the same manner, Jesus himself asserts, "If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death;" that is, to him, who believes in immortality, and acts accordingly, *death* has no reality, if the word be taken in the sense in which the unbeliever understands it, as the end of man's existence. Accordingly, the words, "he hath abolished death," coincide in their practical meaning with a passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews, which says, that Jesus has "delivered them, who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." The words of our text, "life and immortality," as they are put in opposition to "death," we take to be synonymous with "immortal life."

The doctrine of the immortality of the soul, is so incontestably and fully laid down in the New Testament, that it has hardly ever been the subject of controversy among Christians. Although they have differed, and are still differing, about particulars concerning the future state, such as the nature of future rewards and punishments, the doctrine of man's immortality itself pervades the whole system of Christianity. It is presented to us not merely as an enlargement of our knowledge beyond the horizon of our senses; but the principal motives for our conduct in this life are drawn from that which is to come. We are admonished to look, not on the things which are seen and temporal, but on those which are not seen and eternal; we are exhorted to deny ourselves and take up our cross, to rejoice and glory in persecutions and death. The selfish and sensual are threatened with just condemnation; while the true followers of Jesus, who have overcome the world, its terrors as well as its allurements, shall become like the angels in heaven, and enjoy, in common with their blessed Redeemer, an immediate acquaintance and intimate union with Him, who has endowed every human being with the means of rendering himself happy throughout eternity.

If this is the true and manifest doctrine of the Gospel, let us, my friends, conscientiously ask ourselves if we really believe it. I do not mean to call the sincerity of our profession of Christianity in question, particularly not with respect to a doctrine which so entirely coincides with our wishes, that

even those, who do not embrace the Christian system in general, are desirous of believing this part of it. For, every living being, that is conscious of its existence, most intensely desires the continuation of it, and shrinks from the idea of destruction. Accordingly, there is no instance in which the consonance of the principles of the Gospel with the deepest wants of human nature appears more striking, than in this sublime doctrine, that death is death to the body alone, while the soul is to live for ever.

But, although the doctrine of immortality is clearly revealed in Scripture, and although men in general have the strongest desire to adopt at least this principle of our religion, our lives and our hearts, if they be put to the test, afford sufficient reason to doubt the reality of our belief. I will try to illustrate this observation by a few examples.

If our belief in the immortality of our souls were real and thorough, we should neither over-estimate our present life and its perishable enjoyments, nor should we fear any of those evils, the worst and last of which is death; nobody would strive to drown in sensual gratifications and artificial excitement the thought of his final, unavoidable departure from all these temporary enjoyments. Our best exertions would not be thwarted, nor our highest pleasures marred, by the anticipation of an event, which the firm believer in immortality considers as nothing else than a more or less painful operation, performed on our sick body with the full certainty of success. In old age, and in cases of sickness which deprives us of

all expectation of usefulness, the prospect of death, instead of aggravating our pains, would be looked to with delight, as the final relief from all suffering; as a sound sleep, from which our souls are to awake with new strength to the light of eternal day. Separation from our friends by death would not be more, nay, would sometimes be even less, painful than separation on earth. For there are many, many dear friends, who separate here on earth, assured that the happiness of undivided love, which dies away with the last sad adieu, will never be revived by a friendly welcome; — while all those who leave this earth, trusting in the precious promises of Christ, are certain that they shall meet again, in perfect happiness, to separate no more.

If men believed in the immortality of their souls, there would be no slavery in this world. For no one would be deterred from recovering his own liberty, or rescuing his oppressed brethren, by the prospect of finding in the dungeon, or upon the scaffold, the reward of his devoted love. For in the night of his dungeon he knows, that its iron gates cannot contain him when the living walls in which his spirit is imprisoned are rent by the voice of its Redeemer. He who generously and deliberately lays down his life for his friends in the cause of liberty and religion, would not be extolled as a prodigy of disinterested heroism, but as one who feels too rich in spiritual treasures to be bribed by the scanty possessions of this world; as one who is doing his duty, and nothing more than his duty. On the other hand, every at-

tempt to save one's own life, where death would be the means of immortal happiness, must be considered not only as cowardice, but as a want of sound judgment. Moreover, all unjust pretensions and cruel distinctions among men, every proud elevation and servile humiliation, must fall before the acknowledged equality of immortal spirits. No one would despise his poor neighbour, if he knew, that the robe of indigence, which excludes him from the society of his more fortunate brethren, may serve him as a wedding garment on that great and glorious day to which the Lord has invited all the faithful followers of his beloved Son. Instead of trying to outwit and outstrip one another, by a clear-sighted devotedness to their own interests and a blindness to those of others, men would consider themselves as children of the same father, united by the same family interest, and accountable by the great law of love, not only for their own imperfections, but also for those of their fellow-men, so far as they were able to minister to their improvement and happiness.

If, in the foregoing remarks, I have succeeded in setting before you, my fellow Christians, the natural consequences and the true test of a vital and practical belief in immortality, let us now conscientiously ask ourselves, if the whole of our present life is penetrated by the conviction of its eternity. Let us place our mode of thinking and living before the judgment-seat of Christ within us, and ask Him who knows all that is in man, whether we are sincere and practical believers in immortality or not. It is the divine mon-

itor in our breast, who puts this question to every one of us; but there are not many, I fear, who dare to answer it with the solemn and joyful assertion, "Lord, we believe." And what, I pray you, would the most solemn profession of our faith avail us, if our whole manner of living and thinking rise in witness against us. For the belief in the immortality of our souls does not consist in a mere wish, or a passive acquiescence in this doctrine, but in life and action. Therefore, let us not vainly try to deceive ourselves and our God by professing a belief which is not in our hearts. Let us not deprive ourselves of the prospect of coming to a settled conviction of our immortality, by imagining that we have already attained it. No; instead of trying to evade, let us strenuously enter upon, the arduous task of working out our own conviction, by exerting all our intellectual faculties, for the faithful use of which an account will be asked of each one of us, when the Lord, who gave certain talents to each according to his ability, will come to reckon with his servants. We must not expect that powers will be added to us from above, unless we employ the talents we have already received, in all their extent, by proving all things and seeking after that which is good. After having thus performed our duty as intelligent creatures, we may confidently look up for assistance to Him who has promised to lead us into all truth. Revelation itself loses its power to satisfy our reason, if we do not exert it as much as possible to find out, of ourselves, what is true. For revelation was given

to us not as a substitute, but as an incitement, a guide, and an ultimate confirmation of our intellectual labor. Moreover, let not the desire of believing in immortality tempt us to be satisfied with arguments which we should reject, if they were brought in support of any other assertion, and which will not light us through that dark hour, which will put every man's faith to the test. But, on the other hand, let not the circumstance, that such unsatisfactory arguments have been started and believed, discourage us from seeking a more solid foundation. Let us still hope, that we shall find a rock whereupon we may build our faith, so that neither doubt can undermine, nor the floods of death destroy it. Let us not leave unexplored any thing from which we may derive information concerning the future state of our being. For, every point we leave unexamined will become a cause of doubt to us; whereas by thorough investigation it might have become an additional ground of conviction. Let us not shun doubt but challenge it, and follow it out wherever our fearless inquiry may lead us. But let us not forget, that our exertions must prove ineffectual, that in vain we expand every sail of our mind to reach the desired port, without a propitious breeze from above. Faithful inquiry and fervent prayer are the only means of attaining to a settled conviction, an unwavering faith.

Let us then acknowledge, my friends, that we ourselves are the chief cause of the weakness of our faith, by having neglected and abused those sublime

faculties, which were given to us for working out our conviction; and, as repentant and confiding children, let us cast ourselves upon God, and pray, "Lord, help thou our unbelief!"

In the preceding observations I have, after a brief explanation of our text, endeavoured to show, that our common mode of thinking and acting proves that we are deficient in a genuine belief in immortality; which does not consist in a mere wish, or a passive acquiescence in this doctrine, but in life and action; and that faithful inquiry and prayer are the only means of acquiring a genuine belief. I now wish to lead your attention to the true sources of information concerning a future state, and to the principal grounds on which this doctrine rests, and which authorized the Apostle to assert, that *Jesus* brought life and immortality to light. In conformity to my text, which contains a simple declaration of man's immortality, without entering into the particulars of the future state, I shall confine my observations to this fundamental doctrine itself, that the power within us which thinks, feels, wills, and prays, and is conscious of all its operations, that this active and self-conscious principle, which we call the mind, is immortal.

It is evident, that for our belief in immortality we need a stronger foundation to rely upon, than the opinions of other men, how much soever we may prize this authority. The opinions of men concerning immortality, whether they affirm or deny it, can make the doctrine itself neither more nor less true.

For, the wisest and best men have held and spread mistaken notions, and whole nations have labored under error. Accordingly, we must seek better grounds for adopting or rejecting this doctrine, than the belief or disbelief of others. We must search for arguments by which these opinions themselves may be put to the test. There would be, indeed, no need of arguments, if men in this life had the means of finding out by their own experience what becomes of the living principle after the body has ceased to be moved by it. But we know of no communication between the living and the dead. There remain to us, however, two ways of seeking information; namely, to see if, from the nature of things in general, and of man in particular, we may draw any inferences concerning our future state; and, further, to see if the Author of nature and of man has himself given any direct declaration on this subject. Nature and revelation, the works and the word of God, are the only genuine sources of knowledge; they are both to be consulted in order to obtain satisfactory information on the state of man after death. But the extent of this inquiry obliges me to confine my observations, at present, to that particular source of information, to which our text seems to bear the strictest reference. In admonishing his disciples not to fear "them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul," Jesus asserts the immortal *nature* of the human mind. This assertion implies the precise object of my present discourse, in which I propose to answer the question, whether the nature of things in general, and that of the

human soul in particular, exhibits any evidence of its immortality.

Most of our knowledge of the nature of things consists in inferences drawn from experience and history, that is, from natural objects and events, which either fall under our own observation, or are related by trusty witnesses. These inferences are to be credited, although they be not confirmed, or even if they are contradicted, by our senses. Our eyes tell us, that the sun and the stars are moving around our earth, and this has been the belief of men for thousands of years. But this supposition, although founded upon the direct evidence of our senses, has vanished like a dream before the waking eye of science, and every one now believes, against the testimony of his own eyes, that the earth is moving round the sun. In the same manner it may perhaps be shown, that the mind, which in so many individuals seems to be a mere instrument of the body, liable to be worn out by use, and broken by death, is in reality destined and fitted to be master over the body, and to attain its full independence and mastery through death.

An unprejudiced examination of nature in regard to the future state of man, seems to lead to the following results :

First, that the mind of man, although intimately connected with the body during this life, is, in itself, something distinct from the body ;

Secondly, that the effect of death upon the body cannot be supposed to extend to the mind ; and

Thirdly, that the order of nature, as well as the essential qualities of the human mind, affords sufficient evidence of its immortality.

The first of these assertions, that the mind is something distinct from the body, rests upon the essential difference between matter and mind, and upon the incontrovertible consciousness of every human being. No one, speaking properly, can apply the common qualities of material objects to the mind and its operations. Would it not be absurd to ascribe weight, dimension, shape, or color, to thoughts, feelings, or purposes? We call those things material, which we perceive by our senses. But our minds, and all our mental functions, such as feelings, thoughts, and desires, are not perceptible by our senses. The human mind is conscious of itself, through its own intellectual power. If our mind had not this immediate perception of its own self, we should not be capable of tracing the conduct of others, or even our own actions, to their unseen source. We, indeed, hear the words of unkindness, which a person uses against another; but the sound of the words alone is the object of our hearing; our judgment of their unkindness proceeds from, and applies to, a power which is entirely different from that of the voice and the ear. Thus the difference between mind and body is evident from our own consciousness, as well as from the effects of the mind upon the body, and may be illustrated by many undeniable facts.

Moreover, the most common experience shows, that the powers of the mind are not proportional to

those of the body. The latter may be diminished, as by the loss of a hand or a foot, while the mind remains whole as before; and it is certain, that, by the influence of food and air, all the materials of which our bodies consist are continually changing, while the mind is conscious of its own constant identity. Therefore, when a person properly speaks of his own self, he does not mean his body, but his mind; and there is no reason to suppose, that the mind, which is a being distinct from the body, even while it is connected with it, should not be able to exist without it.

These considerations of the difference between the mind and the body lead us on to the second of the beforementioned assertions, that the effect of death upon the body cannot be supposed to extend to the mind. If we examine those changes in the existence of man, which we call death, we find that they consist in the separation of the parts of the body, and its dissolution into the material elements of which it is composed. These changes take place in the body, which is an object of our senses, capable of being divided into parts, and composed of different materials; whereas the mind is not an object of our senses, even while we are alive; and the mere thought of the simple and self-conscious principle within us being divided into parts, and resolved into different ingredients, implies an utter absurdity. To suppose the annihilation of the mind, by death, would be supposing something, of which all our experience of material and immaterial objects affords us not one example.

Moreover it has been shown, that we have no reason to suppose that the existence of the mind depends on that of the body. Therefore the mere circumstance, that the dead body is no longer a fit instrument of the mind, cannot be a ground for doubting the continuance of the latter after death. The same remark applies to instances of sickness, in which the organs, by which the mind acts, are injured or debilitated; which seems to be the case in all those instances, which are improperly called diseases of the mind. For it is not the mind which is diseased, but the corporeal instruments, which the mind needs for a healthy exercise of its powers in this life. But surely the skill of the painter is not impaired by the loss of his pencil; and his talent still remains the same, although the want of practice may have lessened his skill.

But it may be asked, what becomes of the mind in a deep sleep, in a swoon, or similar state, in which all consciousness ceases. I answer, first, that it is not quite certain, that a living person ever is in a state in which all consciousness is entirely gone, although he himself may think so. In this, however, he may be deceived by the great contrast there must be in the feelings of a person, who is suddenly reduced from a state, in which he possesses an immense variety of ideas, to a condition, in which he retains nothing but the simple idea of his own self; and who, afterwards, suddenly recovers his former state, in which numberless other objects repress and outshine the thought of himself, in the same manner as we for-

get our dreams in awaking. But suppose, that, in a swoon or a similar state, our consciousness be entirely lost; is not this very fact, that our mind is capable of missing some of its faculties without ceasing to exist, or losing the power of resuming them after some time, — is not this very fact (which we in part experience after every sleep) a satisfactory evidence, that there is no event in nature, whatever be its effect on our body, or on particular faculties of our mind in its connexion with the body, from which there is any thing to be feared for the existence of the mind itself?

After having shown, that the dissolution of the body cannot be supposed to extend to the mind of man, let us now examine our third assertion, that the order of nature, as well as the essential qualities of the human mind, affords sufficient evidence of its immortality.

Every observer of nature must be struck with that sovereign order, which assigns to each class of beings a certain rank in creation, according to their peculiar powers and abilities. This scale of perfection in the universe is most obvious in those three immense classes of things, which are commonly called the three kingdoms of nature. The mineral, which is bound to the earth by the law of gravitation, is less perfect than the plant, which is, in some degree, superior to that law, as, by its organic growth, it rises above the ground, supporting itself for some time, and perpetuating its seeds. Still higher in the scale of perfection appears the animal. Being free from that material connexion, which confines the plant to the earth, it moves, and has life in itself, to perceive, and feel,

and be governed by its own desires. Thus we observe, in the various classes of being, a tendency of creative nature toward freedom and perfection. But this end is evidently not accomplished in the creation of minerals, plants, and animals, particularly in two respects. There is, among all these beings, not one that can rise beyond that finite degree of perfection, which nature has assigned to the whole species it belongs to. The plant cannot become an insect, nor the insect a bird. In the second place, there is not one among those beings, on whose own determination it depends to fulfil or frustrate the design of nature. The lioness, that defends her young at the expense of her own life, can no more refrain from making this sacrifice, than the violet seed can refuse to bring forth violets. There are, accordingly, two faculties which are not found in the beings that belong to the three kingdoms of nature ; namely, the capacity for infinite improvement, and free agency. This free power of striving after infinite perfection is the characteristic endowment of man, which raises him above animal nature to the kingdom of spirits. The universal law of progression, which, in the inferior creation, assigns to every species of beings a certain degree of perfection, which they must attain, and cannot surpass, — this same divine law applies also to man, though not as a necessary impulse, but as a moral precept ; and not only as a general regulation for the whole race, but as an injunction adapted to the particular capacity of each individual. Nature has made it to depend on the free will of each human being, either to rise in

perfection without end, by virtue, or to sink, by passion, even below the brute. The destination of man for free and endless improvement is manifest in all his mental endowments; in his innate longing after a state of perfection and happiness unattainable in this life; in his intellect, which is capable of infinite enlargement; in the power of his feelings to rise in devotion to the Father of spirits; and in his free will, which enables him to aspire by virtuous exertion above every earthly condition and desire, even above every degree of excellence he has already attained. Truly, if there exists in nature any design, with sufficient power to carry it into effect, if there is any faith in the clearest natural evidences, we may be as certain of the destination of our minds for immortality, as of our eyes for seeing and of our lungs for breathing. In opposition to these inferences from the analogy of nature, it has been observed, that, in old age, the powers of the mind decrease in proportion to the decay of the body. But a more exact observation of human nature shows, that, whenever the natural unfolding of our faculties is not impeded by accident or wilful neglect, our mind is capable of continual increase through the free exertion of the individual; and that the gradual decline of the body, instead of impairing the mind, is in some respects favorable to its developement, by purifying and refining its operations.

One of the most striking proofs of the fitness of the mind of man for an immortal existence, independent of his body and his animal life, consists in the

perfection of human virtue, the spirit of self-sacrifice. The power of self-sacrifice is in man not what it is in the animal, a necessary impulse, but a free power, which he may exercise or not according to his own will. Now, there exists, as far as we can judge, no one thing in nature which has the power of destroying itself; the destruction of one thing being always caused by the superior power of another. It can, indeed, hardly be imagined, that any thing should have power to convert itself into nothing. The free power of self-sacrifice, therefore, which belongs to man, is not to be considered as a faculty of destroying himself; but as a power of his mind to vindicate its independence aud superiority over his body and animal life. Accordingly, every instance of true courage, that is, of deliberate determination to give up all the goods of this life, and life itself, for an object, which is, or is thought to be, superior to all earthly interests, — every fact of this nature is a proof of man's immortality, that surpasses all speculation. The heroes and martyrs of the human race are the true practical philosophers of immortality. For, if the tree shall be known by its fruits, it must be by those which have come to their perfection, and not by those which are worm-eaten, and withering on the tree. In the same manner, human nature cannot be truly known except by its true representatives; and as such we consider those, who have drawn in all the best influences from the tree of this life, to mature, in their hearts, the seeds of a higher existence.

But a brighter manifestation of this doctrine, than

the light of nature can give us, is contained in the word of God. Yet, while we are rejoicing in the warm and clear sunshine of divine revelation, let us not be ungrateful for the light of nature; but remember, that this light, which is reflected from the works of God, is the same that shines forth in his holy word. The light of nature, compared with that of immediate divine revelation, appears like a bright moonlight, which, though frequently obscured by superstition, has guided the wanderers on this earth, for thousands of years, through the night of ignorance and doubt, toward the glorious morning of Christianity.

The gospel of the immortality of the soul of man is contained in the works, as well as in the word of God. But when, through human sin and folly, the power of darkness had increased so much as to make men insensible to the light of nature, then God, once more, as in the beginning, said, "Let there be light," and the light of the world appeared in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

There is a *particular* revelation, which is imparted privately, as it were, to each individual who stands in need of, and deserves it. And there is a revelation on record, calculated for men in general, a message from God to mankind, communicated through the prophets of old, and finally by his own Son; confirmed by miracles, recorded by trusty witnesses, and handed down in a form, which renders it accessible to all persons in all ages.

Let us now examine these two forms of revelation,

which are known to us under the names of "Holy Spirit" and "Word of God."

Every person, who is determined upon doing his duty, even at the expense of his life, is conscious, in the most trying moments, of a power which he did not think himself possessed of before; and, if he is calm enough to examine at those moments the condition of his mind, he will find, that this increase of strength is not an unknown energy of his own self, but a concomitant and auxiliary power, that is granted to him whenever his own faculties prove insufficient for his endeavours to perform his duty. The immortal works of genius, in philosophy and poetry, grow to perfection in the sunshine of inspiration. But this appropriate and unfailing spiritual aid is not an exclusive privilege of a few gifted minds. It is granted to every one who needs, and deserves, and devoutly seeks it. It elevates his thoughts, and gives power to his words and actions. It supports him in sacrificing, as it assists him in preserving his life, whenever the eternal law of his existence, his duty, commands the one or the other. He, therefore, who is resolved to obey this eternal law, even at the expense of his temporal existence, perceives, in this supporting influence of the Spirit on which he relies, that, in his holy obedience, he is borne out by the Framer of that law, the Founder of all temporal and eternal existence.

Thus the influence of the Holy Spirit upon the mind of man assures him of his immortality.

But the history of man shows, that neither the

light of nature, nor that of particular inspiration, was sufficient to keep up, among mankind in general, the consciousness of their own spiritual nature, and of their relation to the Father of spirits. At that time, when men were so much engrossed in worldly views, in superstition, or skepticism, that they had become unsusceptible of true faith, or the evidence of things unseen, it pleased the infinite mercy of God to recall them to the knowledge of himself and of their own eternal destiny. They were recalled in the only way in which they were capable of being impressed, namely, through their own senses by miracles, that is, by acts contrary to the common course of nature, and wrought in evidence of spiritual truths.

To convince the living of the immortality of their souls, Jesus raised the dead, and rose himself from the dead, according to his prediction, and ascended on high, promising to his followers to prepare mansions for them in the world of spirits.

But, beside the miracles, by which the divine authority of Christ's doctrine was established, its divine truth shone forth in the doctrine itself, and in the actions of Jesus and his followers. By teaching and example, fixing in his own conduct the principle, that the soul can and should live above the world while the body is in it, he may truly be said to have introduced immortality into mortal life. "Remember that thou shalt die!" was the celebrated apophthegm of ancient pagan wisdom; but the watchword of Christianity is, "Remember that thou shalt live for ever!" "I have said, Ye are gods!" is the great doctrine

both of the old and the new revelation, emanating from him who is not a God of the dead, but of the living! In pointing out the eternal dictates of duty, the incident of death is hardly noticed in the inspired volume, except as one of the means of performing our duty. Eternal life has begun for man, as soon as he becomes conscious of it; he bears his judgment, his heaven, and his hell, in his own breast; and the very expressions *life* and *death*, become, in the New Testament, standing metaphors for denoting happiness and misery in this, as well as in the future life.

There have been, at all times, excellent men, who have willingly laid down their lives for their friends or their country; but there has been only one, the Son of Man, who has died for mankind. He thus became the founder of that glorious school of martyrs, through which his doctrine was established on earth; and, in this way, the enemies of Christianity themselves were made the instruments of its victory. All these glorious acts of self-sacrifice, which the unbeliever either derides as the madness of virtue, or extols as moral miracles, appear to a thorough Christian, who is conscious of the same immortal spring of action in his own soul, as the only true and natural results of that principle in man, which is alone worthy to be called human nature. It is this divine element in our nature which he has revealed to us, who, by his word, his life, his death, and his resurrection, "hath brought life and immortality to light."

O! let us rejoice, my friends, let us rejoice with fervent gratitude toward him who has refreshed our

thirsting souls with that living water, drawn from the fountain head of truth, that it may become in us a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

He has shown by his word, and confirmed by his example, the invaluable truth, that, in every human frame, however unseemly and lowly, an angel of light is embodied. He has shown us, that our earthly existence is but a rehearsal, in which our souls are to be tuned, and every dissonance in thought and feeling is to be harmonized, that we may be found worthy to join the sacred concert of our fellow-spirits in heaven.

The doctrine of immortality, as revealed to us in the works and the word of God, is essentially a moral principle. It is a moral principle, not only because it threatens misery to the wicked in the same proportion as it promises happiness to the just, but also in regard to the degree of trust, with which the doctrine of immortality can be adopted and maintained by men of different characters. No person can be a believer in the immortality of the mind, who is not conscious of possessing in himself that living principle which is the subject of this belief. He only, who has experienced this moral power of his own mind, by subduing his passions, and rising above his earthly interests, is conscious of the capacity of his mind to exist without his body. They alone, who, by virtuous exertion, strive to overcome the world, can be true believers in immortality; ay, they cannot be unbelievers. The true believer praises God for having brought life and immortality to light through his Son; he praises him, also, for having implanted the fear of

death in his mortal nature, that, by overcoming it, he may render himself worthy of immortal life. "If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death," says the Saviour. But he, who does not keep the commandments of God, who makes his mind an instrument of perishable enjoyments, who is not able to sacrifice his property and his life itself for the cause of God and man, he seeth death, that is, he is in bondage to the fear of death, because his love is not perfect. To him the light of reason becomes a source of doubt and despair; the voice of God in his heart has died away; and the gospel of Christ, with all its high promises, is to him a testament, in which he is indeed designated and called to a rich inheritance, but under a name which he has no right to assume.

The true Christian, who has overcome the world and endured to the end, looks calmly on, when the night of death begins to thrust its deep shades between earth and heaven. Before the last rays of the setting sun of life have died away, the stars of eternity appear to his enlightened eye, and he joyfully commends his spirit into the hands of Him, who, through the gospel of his Son, "hath brought life and immortality to light."

SERMON II.

EXODUS XXXIV. 29, 30.

"And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses' hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him.

"And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone."

"MOSES wist not that his face shone." These words express the substance of the remarks I wish to lay before you.

It is related, in the history of ancient Greece, that, one day, when the Athenians were celebrating one of those great victories by which they freed their country from foreign oppression, the people, with all the illustrious men of Athens, were assembled at the public theatre, to witness the exhibition of a great patriotic drama. While the attention of all was fixed upon the stage, the following words, relating to one of the ancient heroes represented in the tragedy, were pronounced by one of the actors;

"His purpose is, not to *appear* just, but to *be* so."

Whereupon the eyes of all the spectators turned from the actors upon the modest Aristides, as the most perfect exemplification of the sentiment expressed in

the play. The eyes of all turned upon the man, who, by his unassuming excellence, had gained the glorious and fatal surname of the Just, the man who cared least for the gaze of admiration, because his purpose was, not to appear just, but to be so. He alone, in the whole assembly, wist not, and cared not, that his face shone in the eyes of his enthusiastic countrymen.

The same unconcern, and even unconsciousness of appearance, was strikingly exemplified in the great prophet, the deliverer and lawgiver of the Israelites, when, descending from the Mount of God with the tables of testimony in his hands, in the presence of all his people, the glory of God appeared in his countenance; but Moses, Moses alone, "wist not that his face shone."

My friends, I shall not now speak to you of the duty of truth, or of the sin of keeping up false appearances by pretending to possess what we have not, or to be what we are not; of pretensions to wealth, knowledge, taste, esteem, or friendship, while secretly conscious of poverty, ignorance, disrespect, or indifference. The sin I would now set before you does not consist in assuming and keeping up a deceitful appearance; but in thinking of the appearance, the outward show, rather than the real, the intrinsic value of things; in one word, the tendency to display, the sin of vain self-reference and ostentation. The man, who makes a present to or assists another, in order to secure his services or his favor, commits a falsehood if he represents what he does or gives as a service

of love, or a gift of charity. But the man, who never does his alms in secret; the man, who never gives without his left hand knowing what his right is doing; the man, who is ever trying to attract the notice and fix the attention of others upon his words, his actions, his gestures, in short, upon himself, with such eager self-complacency, as if he were persuaded, that the very skin of his face must be shining; — this man is walking in a vain show, thinking more of the image reflected in the admiration of the world, than of the image of God within him.

Is there a parent, or a friend of children, in this assembly, that has not felt the pure delight of beholding in them the artless, unpremeditated, and unconscious expression of tenderness, confidence, and love; or whose heart has not kindled with prophetic joy, while watching the dawn of reason, and marking the first rays of intellectual light, darting forth from the unconscious bosom of childhood? Who has not hailed the holy light of pure intelligence, that sometimes shines through the twilight of childish ignorance, assuring us, that the luminary within, though still below the horizon, is pressing hard upon the borders of conscious existence? And what parent is there, or what true friend of children, whose joy has not been marred, and turned into sadness, on seeing those simple expressions of affection, those first fruits of unconscious intelligence, brought forward as a matter of display, to court admiration, to gratify and stimulate the artificial appetite of a little child, that has already learned to prefer the sweetmeats of flattery to the home-made bread of truth.

Jesus blessed little children, and said, that "of such is the kingdom of heaven." And this blessing belongs to every one whose heart still inhabits the native heaven of its innocence. That which was said of the great prophet, when the indwelling glory appeared outwardly on his countenance, that "he wist not that his face shone," is true also of the little child. It is true as long as the image of God is still shining through the features of innocent childhood; as long as the eye, that was once single, has not learned to reflect the gaze of admiration, and to glow with a feverish thirst for praise.

It is for this reason, that, when I hear well-meaning persons praising children to their faces on account of their bright sayings and winning ways, I have a feeling, as if I heard the flattering insinuations of the serpent in Paradise, tainting the innocent heart by the discovery of its nakedness.

Flattery is at war with the very soul of childhood. Under its influence, the freshness and simplicity, the freedom and pure enthusiasm, the holy unconcern and boundless confidence, of the child give way to an anxious and calculating pursuit after distinction and applause, until it destroys, at length, those very charms of manner and expression, that untaught grace and freedom of speech and motion, which make children the objects of flattery. The child knows now, that his face is shining; and, with the inward reality, disappears also the outward beauty, of holiness.

As a careful gardener would expose the tender stem of a choice plant to the fury of the storm, rather

than bare its root to the rays of the sun, so I would rather see my child exposed to unjust suffering and the dangers of bad example, than to the exciting and enervating influence of flattery.

Flattery tempts man to begin his course of life as an actor and a parasite; and, before he leaves the stage, it will make him a stranger in his home, nay, in his own bosom, leading him on, from step to step, to make the world his counsellor, his confidant, his conscience, and his God.

The love of display, the selfish anxiety about the appearance of what we are doing, is injurious, not only in the education of children, but in every occupation whatever. The reason is obvious. The Apostle advises us, whatever work our hands find to do, to do it with our might. All our strength and attention is required, to execute the work we have in hand to the utmost of our ability. Hence, if we give our minds, which should be in our work, to anxious reflection and calculation, how it will appear when it is done, or how we shall appear while engaged in doing it, the performance cannot be so perfect and satisfactory as if it were the result of our undivided strength and attention. I presume, the daily experience of every one of us will point out to him numerous instances in support and illustration of these remarks. Whoever is called to speak in public, be it from the pulpit, or at the bar, or on the floor of a popular assembly, knows, as well as those who listen to him, that, whenever he is thinking of himself, his words, his style, his tones, or motions, instead of giving his

whole soul to the subject which he is to bring home to his hearers, though he be possessed of the highest powers of eloquence, fails to move and to satisfy either his audience or himself. While he is taking thought about his delivery, as to whether he is expressing himself in choice and appropriate terms and well-built periods, whether his gestures are significant, his tones musical, or his face shining, he is speaking to the eyes and ears, and not to the understandings and hearts of his hearers; or, rather, he is addressing *himself*, as reflected in his own self-complacency or his morbid fear.

Indeed, the mere reader or declaimer, even the actor who lives to make believe, and to give to the mere appearance the impression of reality, can attain to eminence and success only by entering so truly, intelligently, and feelingly, into the sense and spirit of the author, as to forget that he is reciting or acting a part. Many things, that are fitted and intended for individual and social enjoyment, are spoiled of their best charms by a constant self-reference and love of display. For example, that degree of success in the fine arts, which is necessary to quicken, elevate, and refine the pleasure of a private circle, does not require extraordinary proficiency. Accomplishments, in themselves fitted for the delight of society, lose their moral charm by a want of simplicity in the performer. Moderate talent and faithful application, animated by a high sense and true personal enjoyment of the art, and a sincere wish to communicate it to others who are equally sincere in desiring it, are suf-

ficient to grace and enliven the common walks of life with flowers that will gratify the modest beholder, although they may not satisfy the most exquisite taste.

It is this tendency to overrate the mere appearance of things, which has introduced different sets of manners and deportment, suited to different occasions and professions, rather than to the sentiments of the individuals. Some persons think it incumbent on them to wear a different face as well as dress, and assume a peculiar set of manners, on week days and on Sundays, whether their feelings lead them to make this difference in their deportment or not. Clergymen feel bound to move in society according to certain rules prescribed by custom, which it would be difficult to justify by the example of him, whom the Pharisees of that time stigmatized as a friend of publicans and sinners. Indeed, the whole frame and complexion of society shows an anxious submission, and often a sacrifice of individual judgment, sense, and taste, to self-imposed rules of etiquette and fashion. The artificial distinctions of society often take precedence of the eternal distinction between moral greatness and littleness. Wealth is with man an evidence of merit; a fashionable coat a mark of respectability; and a title, imported from the title-growing countries across the sea, admits the bearer to the best society in republican America. We celebrate the fourth of July, therefore we are consistent republicans; we go to church, and therefore we are Christians. The heart of society is sound, because we are satisfied that its face is shining.

My friends, what need is there of any more illustrations and applications? Let us fix our attention upon the fundamental rule. Let us be ashamed to *be*, rather than to *appear*, as we are. Let us not be afraid to appear what we are not ashamed to be; but let us trust, that, if we are right, we shall also appear right. If the eye of the soul is single, the whole body is full of light; the sacred fire, that burns on the inner altar, illumines the temple frame. The mere appearance of what we say and do requires and deserves but a small expense of thought and strength. Moses wist not that his face shone while he talked with God. Whoever has witnessed, once in his life, a sunrise among the Alps, will never forget the impression made on his mind by the first red gleams illumining the highest summits, while the rising luminary itself is hidden from the sight, and night still covers the valleys; until, gradually, the shadows recede before the descending rays, and every hill and dell, water, earth, and sky, are merged in the same flood of light. A similar scene, only far more sublime, is brought before us in our text. It shows us the prophet on the mount of God, his face lighted up by that sun which illumines the world of spirits, and in his hands the records of eternal truth, with which he descends to dispel the spiritual darkness of the people encamped at the foot of the mount, and, finally, to fill the whole world with light and glory.

The illumination of the face of Moses, holding converse with his God, is only a miraculous display of that natural law, by which the powerful workings

of the spirit within are made manifest in the countenance and the whole frame of man. It is the mind within, that forms and fashions the body into a picture, a likeness of itself, and, being reflected in the eye, and, through it, in the mind of another, makes itself felt and understood; and thus these dark bodies of ours, these walls of partition between mind and mind, become the transparent medium of easy communication and intimate communion. Even now, as in the time of the prophets, the uplifted eye, kindling with unearthly light, bears record, that the soul has entered into the presence of God; even now the thirsting heart, having drunk of the well-springs of life, pours itself forth in soul-stirring and inspiring tones and accents, the heavenly music of true Christian eloquence.

Our bodies are fitted by nature to express, by word and action, our thoughts, which are the native language of our minds. Only try to find the right thought, and the thought will find for itself the fittest expression in word and action. Then let us think, and speak, and act in faith; if the bread of life be in us, let us cast it, freely, hopefully, on the great waters of humanity. For, though some word or deed of ours may be occasionally misunderstood and misjudged, our general conduct will solve all difficulties, even as he, who is sowing broadcast, does not care for the few grains that fall and perish on the wayside, if there be enough to cover the deep soil that promises a rich return. At all times let us try to avoid *evil*, more than the *appearance* of evil; and

desire holiness rather than the beauty of holiness. And then, though our face do not shine in the eyes of the world, we feel assured, that He, who is the light of the soul, will see and recognise his own likeness in the inward countenance of his child.

SERMON III.

JOB x. 15.

"If I be wicked, woe unto me! Yet, if righteous, I dare not lift up my head; I am full of confusion beholding my affliction."

WHEN the friends of Job, who came to comfort him, increased his torments by trying to make him look upon them as the fruits of iniquity of which he must be guilty, he defended his own purity. He boldly reproached his comforters with partiality, in endeavouring to justify the almighty Author of his sufferings, by criminating the innocent, defenceless victim.

"Will ye speak wickedly," he said, "will ye speak wickedly for God?" But, believing in the justice of God, and yet unable to reconcile his undeserved affliction with his belief, he expressed the disturbed state of his mind, produced by this conflict between his experience and his faith, in these words; "If I be wicked, woe unto me! Yet, if righteous, I dare not lift up my head; I am full of confusion beholding my affliction." We see, in these words, a striking exhibition of a trial of faith, to which no one, who has not learned to look upon the consequences of human actions with atheistic indifference, can be a stranger. In our common version, the sense of the

passage is impaired. It reads thus. "If I be wicked, woe unto me! and if I be righteous, yet will I not lift up my head. I am full of confusion; therefore see thou mine affliction."

This translation places the passage in a false light, in which we do not recognise the character of Job. It makes him say, that, even though he be righteous, yet the consciousness of his purity was not sufficient to give him courage to lift up his head before God, that is, confidently to assert the testimony of his conscience. But, on the contrary, we find him, throughout the conversation with his friends, defending his innocence, desiring to plead his cause before God, yea, to reason with the Almighty.

The common version, then, which throws upon our text a shade of the doctrine of the insufficiency of human virtue before the bar of divine justice, — a doctrine from which the whole poem is so singularly free, — is not in keeping with the character of Job. Nor is it so well suited to the words of the original, as the translation which I have given on the authority of some of the best interpreters of the book of Job. "If I be wicked, woe unto me! Yet if righteous, I dare not lift up my head; I am full of confusion, beholding my affliction." The words express, most clearly, the painful trial of his faith in divine justice, with which the sight of his affliction, notwithstanding the consciousness of his innocence, seemed irreconcilable.

I have said, the words of our text express a state of mind to which not one of us is a stranger. Who

has not known, from his own experience or that of others, that, sometimes, the most judicious as well as laudable efforts are followed by results, which reason and conscience lead us to consider as the just consequences of fraud or gross negligence; while folly and crime are carrying off the prize of wisdom and virtue. The husbandman, who sows his grain in due season, finds the seed rotten in the earth; while his improvident neighbour, sowing at an improper time, reaps a harvest, which seems to charge with folly the experience and mature judgment of ages. The mechanic consumes his time, his health, and his life, in the contrivance and construction of a machine, which, to its inventor, is the cause of misery and an untimely death, and the source of countless wealth to the undeserving heirs of self-sacrificing genius. The merchant, who is guided by the wisest calculation of probabilities, is ruined; while he, who ventures his all upon what of all things is the most improbable, is crowned with success.

> "Riches are oft by guilt or baseness earned,
> Or dealt by chance to shield a lucky knave,
> Or throw a cruel sunshine on a fool."

The parent, who devotes himself to the education of his son with unremitting care and wise affection, finds his highest efforts, his fondest hopes, blasted and disgraced by the criminal folly of his child; while, to other children, the very vices of the parents serve as warning examples, and thus become incentives to virtue and piety. The unsuccessful patriot is made to expiate the crime of having loved his country better

than himself, by expatriation. The early Christians, who were distinguished from all their contemporaries by looking upon the whole earth as their country, and upon all mankind as their countrymen, were charged, by their heathen persecutors, with a hatred of the human race; and many of the philanthropists of later days have shared their fate, with no other support under their sufferings, than the words of Jesus; "Great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

All these are clear cases of undeserved suffering and unmerited success, to which every one may add many more from the history of his own life. Any one of these may prove sufficient to undermine the faith in divine justice, when the human mind, as in the case of Job, is overwhelmed with affliction, or as in that of the worthless favorite of fortune is elated by unaccountable success. And, when the faith of man in divine justice is destroyed, the difference itself between right and wrong, vice and virtue, — a difference grounded not upon the accidental consequences, but on the natural tendencies of human actions, — is apt to fade away from the unbelieving mind. I have remarked, that the experience of undeserved affliction tempts some men to an actual or virtual denial of the overruling justice of God. On others, the same experience produces a different, though an equally painful and injurious effect. They hold fast their faith in divine justice; but a contracted view of the course of moral discipline, which God has instituted for unfolding and perfecting the nature

of man, leads them to see, in every disappointment and affliction they meet with, a divine punishment. They search their lives and their hearts to find an adequate cause, some action or omission, by which they have deserved this supposed manifestation of divine displeasure. When real faults are not to be found, or those, which they are conscious of, are not sufficient to account for the severity of their sufferings, their morbid sensibility fixes upon innocent amusements, upon opinions which may be errors, nay, upon dreams, as just grounds of condemnation. In order to justify God, they think it necessary and right to wrong their own souls.

Among the most painful instances of this morbid moral sensibility, there is one, which is not unfrequently met with even among rational Christians. I have often been called upon to sympathize with those who were mourning over the loss of their dearest friends; and what human heart is there able to dispute the divine right of grief to the grateful offering of tears and prayers. But the strong support, in all manner of misfortune, more effectual than all the consolations of sympathizing friendship, is the knowledge that our suffering is not the fruit of our doing, but brought on by circumstances for which we are not answerable. When our best possessions and most precious hopes are shipwrecked, conscience serves as a life-preserver to the sinking spirit, and saves it from despair. But what balm is there for the wounded spirit, if conscience itself is made to poison the shafts of misfortune; if the calamity, that has come upon

us, is considered not merely as a trial, which, by bearing and enduring to the end, we may convert into a blessing, — not as a necessary part of our moral education, — but as a punishment which we have deserved? And what effort of reason can free the sufferer from this cruel delusion, if he has learned to look upon his very inability to find in himself, in his own conduct and heart, a sufficient cause to account for his misfortune, as the effect and evidence of the total depravity of his nature?

What a strange being is man! On the one hand, shrinking from the approach of pain, and trying, by all means, to avert or cast off the evil; and, on the other, trying, of his own accord, to aggravate it, and to complete his misery by setting aside the testimony of his own consciousness, and perverting his reason into a belief, that every merely natural and adventitious evil is, in truth, a judicial calamity brought on by his own depravity.

That tendency to the infinite, which distinguishes human nature from the brute, which causes us to long after immortality, and to thirst after the living God, — this same tendency, which, under the guidance of reason, enables us to form a rational and spiritual faith and a religious character, becomes, when connected with ignorance, error, and passion, the source of fanaticism and religious madness.

Some religionists, conscious of having made uncommon attainments in holiness, have flattered themselves into a belief of moral perfection, of absolute superiority to every possible temptation, and, from

this imaginary moral height, have fallen either into the depths of vice, or hopeless self-delusion. Others, on the contrary, have magnified the real faults of which their conscience accuses them, into the belief of the total depravity of their nature, which, if it be acted out, must lead either to absolute indifference with regard to right and wrong, sin and virtue, or to despair and insanity. This is the danger to which those are exposed, who see, in every calamity that accidentally befalls them, a judicial evil, the consequence and the evidence of their own guilt, in spite of the testimony of their own conscience, and the verdict of their own reason.

The words of our text express a state of indecision, which is as yet free from either of the two opposite errors, into which a sufferer like Job is liable to fall. His undeserved calamity has not induced him, either to renounce his faith in the justice of God, or to become untrue to himself by discarding the evidence of his own conscience. Yet his words betray a state of indecision, of temptation to become untrue either to his faith or to his reason. "If I be wicked," he says, "woe unto me; yet if righteous, I dare not lift up my head; I am full of confusion, beholding my affliction." He is full of confusion; because his affliction, being sent by God, makes him doubt the assertion of his own conscience, at least so far as to make him propose to himself the question, whether he be indeed righteous or wicked, whether the testimony of his conscience be not overborne by his affliction.

Nothing, my friends, can dissipate these doubts, to which all are liable, — nothing can prevent them from destroying our faith either in ourselves or in God, but a clear, comprehensive view of the course of discipline which the Creator has appointed for the moral education of man. Not every instance of success is to be taken as a reward, a divine acknowledgment of human merit, as it may appear to the self-complacent favorite of fortune. And not every misfortune is a punishment, as it appears to the conscientious self-tormentor. But the experience both of deserved and undeserved good and evil is necessary to form the religious character. Both together are fitted to enable us to establish that moral independence and lofty trust in God, which make the character of Jesus the universal and eternal standard of human perfection. To the malefactors that were crucified with Jesus, the cross was, according to the acknowledgment of one of them, a just punishment, and as such it accomplished the reformation of the penitent man. To Jesus, to him who was without sin, the cross was an undeserved affliction; yet of him, too, we read, that he was "made perfect through sufferings."

Just rewards and punishments strengthen the judicial and prophetic authority of conscience, which demands for every one, and promises to him in the long run, in the endless course of his existence, an amount of happiness or misery commensurate with his good or ill deserts. On the other hand, undeserved success and disappointment are the most powerful incentives to build up a character that shall be proof

against all adventitious good and evil, and to hold fast the faith in the providential fitness of every part of human experience to promote the benevolent object of God in the creation of man. Adventitious good or evil is a trial and a test of faith and virtue, without which the moral and religious man, who has found happiness proportioned to his merit in this life, cannot feel sure of his power to resist the temptations both of ease and of destitution, of pride and of shame, of selfish hopes and unbelieving fears.

There never has been, there never can be a human life, that is all sunshine; clouds and shadows cross the path of the most prosperous man. Joy follows pain, and pain joy; and the one gives rise to the other. The pain we feel from the absence of our friends enhances the joy of reunion; and their love, which is our greatest blessing, is also the cause of our deepest sorrow. Thus pain is the indispensable condition of joy; and joy again becomes the source of pain, even as the sunshine is the cause of the opposite shadow. In this constant change of good and evil, one thing should never be forgotten. All afflictions, which do not destroy our capacity of judging, and acting, or enduring, are in their nature transitory, and fitted to work out greater blessings; *all* afflictions, I say, except those of which we ourselves are the sole authors. Adventitious evils are like the shadows cast in the morning, which are continually decreasing till all darkness is absorbed in meridian light. Moral evils are as shadows cast at the close of day, which are lengthening and deepening into

midnight gloom. All other calamities, even if we cannot resist and overcome them, are fitted to exalt the character, if we but patiently endure them. But with great moral evil it is not so; nothing but resistance unto death will satisfy the demands of conscience; the patient endurance of sin is sin.

But, on the other hand, let us remember, that sin, while it is the only evil which, if not successfully resisted, is necessarily and perpetually increasing, is also the only evil of life which is wholly under our own control; we alone have created it; we alone, at any time, are able to destroy it. Then, if trouble come upon us, let us examine it with scrupulous, yet fearless care, endeavouring to trace it to its source. If the source of the evil be in our own bosom, we may well exclaim, with Job, "If I am wicked, woe unto me!" Nothing but the deep-going ploughshare of remorse can root out the weeds of the heart, and fit it to bring forth fruits meet for reform. But if, on searching our ways and our inmost heart, we find no adequate cause of the trouble that has come upon us, no just ground of self-condemnation, then let us dismiss all superstitious fears, and hold fast our faith in the benevolent wisdom of God, which requires undeserved, as well as deserved suffering, as means of moral discipline, to fit us for the perfection of happiness for which we were created; believing, that, though we sow in tears, we shall reap in joy.

Yea, let us dismiss the tormenting doubts which oppressed the virtuous Job; for, if we are righteous, we dare lift up our head. We may look upon our

fellow-men, whether they be friends or enemies, with that fearless trust, with which a righteous man looks into a righteous man's face. And we may look up to God with a deep sense of our imperfection, yet with that perfect love which casteth out fear, with which a child meets the well-known countenance of a just and loving father.

SERMON IV.

LUKE II. 46.

"They found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions."

THE apostle John says, that if every thing that Jesus did should be written, the world itself could not contain the books. Of all these inestimable riches of sacred history, how little has been transmitted to posterity, how much is lost to the world. The value of the little, that is left us, enables us to form, at least, a vague conjecture of the greatness of the loss of that world of deeds, which would have required a world of books to contain it. Indeed, we feel as if we could hardly be reconciled to the thought, that those unrecorded events in the life of our Saviour should be lost for ever. Not that we have any reasonable expectation of finding, among the unpublished manuscripts, which the pious ignorance of former times has hoarded up in convent libraries, some record, containing a credible addition to the history of Jesus. But we would fain cherish the belief, that this unknown part of the history of Jesus will one day be revealed to us, when the book of life, in which all the deeds done in the body are recorded by the heavenly

evangelist, shall be laid open to our disembodied spirits.

I have spoken of the small amount of all the sayings and doings of Jesus, that has been rescued from oblivion. And yet the little that is saved, — how much more valuable is it than all the monuments of human history besides. The events, related by the Evangelists, are not only in themselves of infinite value to the moral and spiritual progress of mankind; the few facts, there recorded, are such as to reveal much that is untold. Such are the individuality and the consistency of our Saviour's character, that the whole likeness may be devised from a few lineaments. These fragments of the history of Jesus are like the ruins of some exalted works of ancient architecture; a few broken columns are sufficient to reveal to posterity the whole conception of the divine artist.

No part of the life of Jesus is so devoid of historical evidence as the period of his youth. Of what Jesus was, when he came forth from the baptism of John, we may form some conception from his subsequent actions; but how he became what he then already was, — by what steps, by what aid from without or from above, or by what efforts of his own, he attained that inward glory which the Baptist beheld in him, when he exclaimed, "Behold the Lamb of God!" — the history of his youth, and especially his education, — is wrapped in deep obscurity. It is this that gives to the words of our text, which represent Jesus, when twelve years old, sitting in the midst of the teachers of Israel, a value, which only he, who will reflect upon them attentively, can justly estimate.

I am aware, that, apart from mere curiosity, the history of the education of Jesus Christ cannot seem a matter of great importance to those who believe, that he was born in full possession of all the knowledge, wisdom, and power, which he exhibited in his ministry; that, retaining the consciousness of a glorious preëxistence, he brought into this life all he displayed in the course of it. It is true, indeed, that, if Jesus was born perfect, he was incapable of learning any thing, or of making any intellectual or moral progress. But that this view, which necessarily implies his incapacity of improvement, does not agree with the latter part of his life, seems evident from the remark of one of his disciples, that Jesus was "*made perfect* by suffering." And that this view of him is not true, with regard to the early part of his life, is evident from the remark of the Evangelist, that Jesus "increased in wisdom" as well as in stature. The same is apparent also, from the words of my text, in which we are told, that, when twelve years of age, Jesus was found by his parents in the temple, listening to the teachers of Israel, and asking them questions. In order to fit himself for the most effectual service of God, he tried to possess himself of the wisdom of the wisest. It was this preparatory service, which he called "being about his Father's business." Hearing others, and asking them questions, are the essential employments of a learner. Jesus, then, in order to fit himself to become the teacher of his people, began with being a learner.

My friends, if we will reflect on this circumstance

with a view to our own improvement, we may find, that, while so much is to be learned from the teachings of Jesus, some instruction may be derived, also, from the brief record that assures us, that the great Teacher began with being a learner.

To learn, to listen to the voice of instruction, and to render it more instructive still by asking questions, this is the beginning of true wisdom. To hear and to ask, is the special duty and chief occupation of childhood and youth. To children, therefore, to the young, the example of Jesus, sitting in the temple among the wisest men of his nation, is peculiarly interesting and useful. In the course of education, which divine Providence has laid out for the successive generations of man, it is the calling of the young, not only to grow up to the moral stature of their elders, not only to overtake those who have set out before them in the way of perfection, but to outrun them in the course. But, in order to grow wiser and better than their fathers, the first endeavour of the sons must be, to make themselves as wise and as good as they. The fond contemplation of the proud eminence to which they are destined, particularly in a free country, is apt to dazzle the young, and to betray them into a belief, that they have already apprehended, that genius will stand to them in the place of experience, and good fortune in the place of persevering industry.

Instead of losing time in the humble occupation of hearing others and asking questions, many begin forthwith to practise and to teach. They are too

proud to listen to the instruction of others, as it might indicate a want of information of their own, or to ask questions, lest they should betray their ignorance. They forego the means of improvement within their reach, from an excessive fear of becoming imitators, or forfeiting the name of a self-taught genius; and their ignorance of what others have said and done keeps up their self-complacency, and satisfies their consciences, when they lay claim to originality for thoughts or experiments, which have been brought forward long ago, and tried, and found unsatisfactory; while the errors and failures of their authors would have led to discoveries and improvements, if it were not for the conceited indolence of their descendants.

My friends, the example of Jesus, sitting in the temple, though peculiarly applicable to the young, is a lesson to us all; for, in comparison with him, we are all as little children. Indeed, every period of our lives may be considered as a period of infancy in relation to every succeeding period. In no season of life does it become us to be self-sufficient, fretful dogmatists; but always to be learners, humble learners. Let us endeavour to place before ourselves the exalted character of a true learner, or faithful student of truth. The true learner is, in the first place, an attentive hearer. It does not become us to be slow or dull of hearing; but to preserve and exercise the inward ear, that it may catch the faintest whispers of duty, and not require to be roused by the thunder-claps of retributive justice. Nor let us be forgetful hearers, that are hearers only, but never doers, of the word.

Let us beware, also, that the words of the Apostle be not fulfilled in us, when he says, "The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but, having itching ears, they will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts; and they will turn away their ears from the truth; and shall be turned unto fables." He who is determined upon holding fast his own sentiments, whether they be right or wrong, will bear but a certain kind of truth, done up in suitable portions, and made palatable by a slight admixture of specious error. And the unwelcome truth will offend and enrage him more than the grossest error. For the God of truth has raised to himself a witness in every heart; and so he, who reproves another truly, finds an ally in the offender's own bosom.

Thus it is reported of the Jews, that, when they killed Stephen, they stopped up their ears, being bold enough to commit murder, but not bold enough to hear the truth. God has made even the wrath of man to praise his truth.

The first essential attribute of the true learner, then, is his being a willing, quick, attentive, discriminating, faithful, and courageous hearer. The second great duty of the learner, as exhibited in the example of Jesus, consists in asking questions, not with a view to display his ingenuity, or to expose the ignorance of his neighbour, but for the sole purpose of acquiring knowledge.

The habit of asking questions, the spirit of inquiry, is to the mind what the use of glasses is to feeble sight, and what the telescope is, even to the strong

natural vision. But in asking questions there is the same difference as in the use of glass as a help to vision. If your questions are prompted and pointed by the pure love of truth, your inquiry will serve you as a telescope, revealing objects, remote and minute, which are hidden from the listless looker-on, and destined to be the just reward of the faithful observer. But, if our questions be prompted by self-love, the precious glass, which was intended to become a telescope to the mental vision, being overlaid with the quicksilver of vanity, will serve only to reflect our own image.

Darkness rests upon the origin, darkness encompasses the end, of human existence. We are born ignorant, yet without the satisfaction of unconscious ignorance. The painful consciousness of our native ignorance creates in us an intense thirst after the acquisition of knowledge; yet the longest life, allotted to man in this world, is not sufficient to answer the questions of his childhood. The mysterious principle within us, which forms and moves the body, and manifests itself more clearly in the operations of the mind, in thoughts, affections, and resolutions,—this invisible power, far more wonderful than the wind, of which it is said, that "it bloweth where it listeth," and the sound of which we hear, yet "cannot tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth," the life of the body and the life of the soul, what is it? what is its origin? and what its destination? The wants of the *animal* creation, hunger and thirst, the desire of motion and of rest, are amply and fitly pro-

vided for in every part of the earth. But in the soul there are wants and cravings, for which no adequate provision is made in the works of nature. That Wisdom, which has "length of days in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honor," that Wisdom, with all her gifts, does not satisfy the cravings of the human soul. For what is length of days, or riches, or honor, to him who longs for immortality? The richest blessings, that flow from the pure fountain of domestic life, cannot satisfy the heart that anticipates a final termination of these blessings, which become more dear, more indispensable to us, the longer and the more fully we are permitted to enjoy them. Nothing less than the immortality of our affections, the boundless accumulation of moral and intellectual wealth, the infinity of our being, can satisfy the demands, and explain the existence, of these mysterious longings, which, so far as we know, belong to no other creature than man.

Are we justified in believing, that these unaccountable desires, these tendencies to the Infinite, are indeed indications and promises of a creative Providence? Has our faith in the immortality of the soul and the existence of God a broader and more solid foundation, than our fond desire that it may be so?

The same religious wants, and the same intense desire to satisfy them, which lead the ignorant man to try to elicit oracles from rocks and trees, from the flight of birds, and the entrails of animals, by the magic art of the sorcerer, — the same spiritual necessities and aspirations induce the civilized man to confer with his

fellow men, to communicate to others his hopes and his fears, his doubts, and his convictions.

My friends, every man that is born into this world finds himself in a temple, surrounded by teachers of wisdom; and, in order to grow wise, and become a teacher to others, whether by words or by his example, his first employment must be that of Jesus. He must listen to the voice of instruction, and ask questions. I say each one finds himself in a temple surrounded by teachers. Is not your own mind a temple? Are not the capacities, the natural fitness and tendency of all your faculties, your all-searching reason, your devoted affections, your free will, your uncompromising conscience, are they not teachers and prophets, revealing your duty and your destiny?

Every event of life, every instance of experience, leaves upon our lives and our minds certain impressions, deeper or fainter, according to the susceptibility and retentive powers of the individual. These successive impressions, these inscriptions on the walls of the inner temple, which the eye of faith can see, and the ken of reason may decipher, are confirmations and running commentaries, as it were, of the sacred text, engraved on the tablets of the heart. I say, the course of Providence, as it is traced on our lives and our minds by the handwriting of experience, sustains and justifies the inferences which the philosophy of the mind derives from the natural fitness of its faculties, and from its instinctive and irrepressible longings and strivings after endless individual existence, and harmonious progress. Thus, both nature

and experience furnish an explanation to the farewell promise of Jesus to his friends, "I go to prepare a place for you; that, where I am, you may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." In this world of uncertainty, are you troubled and anxious to know, whither you are bound, and what is the way that leads to the end of our being? Open the temple gate, enter into the sanctuary of your own soul, lay your questions before the oracle within, and listen to its teachings. It is not only the written word, it is the voice of Christ within us, that speaks to us; "All that are in the graves shall come forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of condemnation." "He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." "We all, with open face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory."

The more diligently and devoutly we search our own being, the more clearly we perceive, that, when we call the human mind a temple, it is not merely a fanciful conception, but a figure, that places before us the destination of the mind, as foretokened by its nature. And when we extend our devout contemplation beyond our individual to universal nature, we find that this temple is but a shrine in the universal temple. The infinite variety, the ceaseless changes, that are pressing upon the mind, and crowding out one another, dazzle and bewilder the observer, until a deeper study reveals to him the all-pervading har-

mony, the sovereign design, that fixes the destiny of every atom, as well as of all the revolving worlds and systems of worlds that are alike parts of the infinite whole. The world, I say, appears to the devout contemplator, not only as a fit dwelling-place for numberless beings, but as a temple, in which the Spirit of Truth is the priest, and Providence is the teacher, and every pure heart is an altar to the universal Mind. As soon as the human mind attains to this sublimest of all conceptions, the words of Jesus come home to the understanding heart; "The hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth."

Under this mighty dome, decked with unfading pictures, supported by invisible pillars, compassing all things; in this universal temple, who would not be a learner, asking questions, and, with child-like humility, listen, cherish, and obey the searching, enlightening, and consoling words of the universal Parent? Though no audible tones should resound through the temple of temples, the works of the Creator are his words. In these works we shall find answers to all our questions, yet not answers that shall settle and close all our inquiries, but rather such as, by the solution of minor difficulties, shall stimulate us to investigations too vast for the present life, pointing to fountains of instruction in undiscovered regions of futurity, and urging us to give ourselves up confidently and boldly to the Spirit of Truth, that shall guide us into *all truth*.

SERMON V

EPHESIANS IV. 28.

"Let him that stole steal no more; but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth."

THREE virtues, important in themselves, and intimately connected with each other, are enjoined in these words of St. Paul. The Apostle admonishes him that has been guilty of theft, of dishonesty, to steal no more, to become an honest man. He moreover advises him to labor, working the thing that is good, and thus to add to the virtue of honesty, that of industry. But lest he should labor only for his own selfish interest, and thus forfeit the highest reward of honest industry, the Apostle exhorts him to work not for the purpose of gratifying his appetites and selfish desires, but "that he may have to give to him that needeth." He advises him, who wishes to live no longer by the wages of iniquity, but by honest labor, to labor for the supply of the wants of others as well as his own, by the habitual exercise of that primitive Christian virtue, which now, as in the age of the Apostles, possesses the wonder-working power of converting earthly into heavenly treasures.

Honesty, industry, and charity are the three virtues enjoined in our text. On each of these, and on their connexion with each other, I wish to offer you some observations.

My friends, the words of the Apostle, "Let him that stole steal no more; but rather let him labor, that he may have to give to him that needeth," are addressed to each one of us. Let us not be deceived by mere words. The Apostle speaks directly of one of the grossest crimes, of which, perhaps, not one of us feels himself guilty. But what he designated by this example, the sin of dishonesty, is an offence of such a general nature, that, perhaps, not one of us, if, after a serious self-examination, he puts the question to his own heart, may comfort himself with the answer that he is not guilty. Have we never delayed the payment of a just debt when it was in our power to pay it? Have we never pretended respect or affection that we did not feel? Have we, in no instance, either from party feeling (political or religious), or from love of money, of office, or of fame, or from personal dislike, or resentment, or envy,—have we never, from these or any other selfish motives, sacrificed the truth by falsifying, aggravating, or extenuating the facts, on which the success or failure of our personal interests depended?

Is there any one amongst us, who can say to himself before God, that he has never, in the slightest degree, been guilty of any of these forms of dishonesty?

The intemperate man and the sensualist, who rob

themselves, their families, and society, of the benefit of their health, their talents, their characters, are in a high degree guilty of dishonesty. In short, let each one translate the plain, practical admonition of the Apostle into the language of his own character and taste, and he will not be tempted to join the Pharisee in thanking God that he is holier than others.

Accordingly, when the Apostle admonishes him that stole to steal no more, the letter of the law, which he lays down, is addressed to the thief only, while the spirit of his admonition denounces, and calls to repentance, every species of dishonesty, be it theft or fraud, calumny or oppression. His words apply to us, whether we injure another by barefaced robbery or by a deceitful bargain, and whether we violate his property or his honest fame, or deprive him of his personal freedom, be it by arbitrary imprisonment for honest debt, or by keeping him, who is our brother as truly as God is his and our Father, in abject servitude as a beast of burthen and of draught. Whether the laws of the land and public opinion forbid or sanction the act, the law of God, written on the heart and proclaimed by the gospel, condemns the deed, and calls the doer to repentance, ere it summons him before his judgment-seat.

Again, the admonition, "Steal no more," is addressed, not only to him who is going on in the way of crime, adding theft to theft and fraud to fraud, but to him also who is enjoying the fruits, or striving to save himself from the just consequences, of his crime. What did he say, at whose house Jesus, the friend

of sinners, desired to abide? "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and, if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." These were the sentiments expressed by Zaccheus, when the Prince of Peace entered his house as a guest to him who was a sinner. And such must be the sentiments of every sinner who longs for the spirit of peace to visit the desolate chambers of his soul.

Is there, within the reach of my voice, any one who has built up his prosperity on the ruin of his neighbour? "My friend," I would say to him, "it is happy for you, if the stream of wealth, that was forced into a wrong channel, has not already left it dry, to return no more; it is happy for you, if the victim of your dishonesty can still be benefited by your repentance; if your misconduct has not already urged him on to crime, to despair, to an untimely death. But, though the grave should cover the human victim, that you have offered up to Mammon, your guilt, and your duty to repent and make reparation, are living still, and they will follow you wherever you go, to the domestic fireside, to the place of business, to the house of God; they will be with you in the glittering circles of fashion, and in the solitude of old age. From the moment of your guilt, even to the end of your days, a mortgage is laid upon all your possessions, upon all your hopes. Though there be no one on earth bold or powerful enough to demand payment of your solemn debt, or to accuse, or condemn, or punish you; within your

own soul there is an importunate creditor, a bold accuser, an uncompromising judge, a fearful tormentor. If the man, whom you have wronged, has found a refuge from his troubles in the grave, his family, his rightful heirs, are your creditors. And if you should find no one that would require you to make restitution to him, your conscience will never make peace with you, until you exchange a life of selfishness for a life of self-sacrificing benevolence; until you see in every sufferer, though he be a stranger to yourself, a brother of him whom you have wronged, and who will meet you again before the judgment-seat of Him, who regards every thing that is done to the least of his brethren as being done to himself.

Honesty is often recommended to those who seem more especially to need the recommendation, by the common saying, that "honesty is the best policy." This maxim is, to a certain extent, true, and borne out by experience. The dishonest man is continually undermining his credit; and not only is credit the first requisite for obtaining the conveniences of life which can be bought or hired, but all our social blessings, arising from the confidence, esteem, and love of our fellow-men, depend essentially on good faith. Our conscience and our reason fully approve of a state of things that should secure the enjoyment of property, of confidence, esteem, and affection, to him who alone deserves them. So far, then, the common saying, that honesty is the best, that is, the most profitable policy, has a good foundation both in experience and in sound reason. But, like all the other cur-

rent doctrines of expediency, which recommend virtue, not for its own sake, that is, on account of the happiness which is found in the *exercise* of virtue, that common saying, too, which makes honesty an instrument of policy, is untrue and mischievous in some of its most important bearings and consequences.

In the first place, those, who are in the habit of considering honesty as the most profitable line of conduct, are apt to look upon virtue, in general, as a matter of policy; to value it solely or chiefly in proportion to the price it will bring in the market. This habit of calculating the interest of virtue undermines the moral sensibility, and, by degrees, unfits the selfish calculator for that deep satisfaction, arising from the simple consciousness of rectitude, which the truly honest man does not hesitate to purchase with the loss of all the advantages which the most successful policy could have procured.

But, besides the immoral tendency of this economical view of virtue, it is not consistent with facts, with experience, that honesty is always the best, or most successful, policy. He is not always the most successful merchant, who, in no instance, deviates from the strict principles of honesty; but rather he, whose general way of doing business is so fair and equitable, that he can, without much danger, avail himself of some favorable opportunity to make his fortune by a mode of proceeding, which would have ruined his credit, if he had been so impolitic as to make this successful deviation from duty the general line of his conduct. Again, he is not always the

most prosperous lawyer, who never undertakes the defence of a cause which his conscience condemns; but rather he, who never undertakes a cause so palpably unjust, that it cannot be gained even by the most skilful and artful management; while the power of making a bad cause appear good, when discreetly employed, is apt to enhance, rather than degrade, his professional character. Again, he is not always the most influential politician, who never deviates from the straight path of political justice; but rather he, who goes upon the common principle, that "all is fair in politics," provided he does not become guilty of any such dishonesty as will not be pardoned by his own party. In the same way, he is not apt to be the most popular divine, who, regardless both of the praise and of the censure of men, declares the whole counsel of God, as it stands revealed to his own mind; but rather he, who regards the signs of the times as much as the handwriting of God, modifying the plain honesty of Apostolic preaching with a politic regard to the likes and dislikes, the passions and prejudices, of men.

I believe, then, that experience does not verify the common saying, that honesty is always the best, that is to say, the most profitable policy. It is so in most cases, but not in all. Hence, those who recommend honesty, on the ground of its being the best policy, advise men to act from a motive which, in some, perhaps the most important cases, may lead them into dishonesty. Steal no more! cease to do evil! learn to do well! These are the simple precepts, addressed

to the consciences of men, without leaving it to their discretion to decide in what cases they may do evil, if in all others they do well. If you compare this simple doctrine of Scripture and of conscience, which enjoins honesty because of its intrinsic excellence, with the doctrine of worldly wisdom, which recommends honesty as the most profitable policy, and if you put both maxims to the test of experience, you will know by their fruits which of them is of God, and which of men. In those cases, in which honesty is, in part, the worst policy, the man, who is virtuous for virtue's sake, will choose to endure all the evils connected with the performance of duty, rather than the simple consciousness of guilt; while in all those cases, in which honesty turns out to be the best policy, the joy of acting right, without regard to the consequences, exceeds every other reward.

The Apostle advises him that stole, not only to steal no more, but to labor, to turn his hands, being washed from the stain of iniquity, to some useful employment, to "work the thing which is good." And here we cannot sufficiently praise that wise and bountiful Father, who has prepared an infinite variety of employments, suited to the individual capacity and inclination of each of his children. The divine law leaves to each one the choice of his profession, yet with the salutary admonition, whatever work our hands find to do, to do it with our might. In the sight of God, and in the estimation of all truly intelligent men, one profession is as respectable as another. God is no respecter of persons; how much less of

employments. The common supposition, that much knowledge and intellectual culture unfits or indisposes a man for manual labor, is as erroneous as the corresponding opinion, that manual labor is unfavorable to the highest exercise of the mind. Sound knowledge and true wisdom alone enable a man to accommodate himself to any circumstances of life, and to make himself master of them. And, on the other hand, the meanest service may be performed from a motive, that may clothe the manual labor of a hired servant with a dignity far superior to any honor that can be conferred by church or state. Most of those, to whom the great Teacher revealed the whole counsel of God, were fishermen; and the Apostle, who, in the words of our text, exhorts men to labor, was a tent-maker, though, sitting at the feet of Gamaliel, he had imbibed all the knowledge and wisdom of his country and age; and, even after he had entered upon the exalted ministry of truth and salvation, he gloried that his own hands ministered to his necessities.

The third virtue, embraced in our text, charity, is a subject which must make every one feel, though his heart be full to overflowing, how difficult it is to embody in human language a heaven-born emotion. Though he had the gift of tongues and the eloquence of inspiration, who can do justice to charity? What are all the various perfections which constitute the Christian character, without that one "which is the bond of perfectness"? The words of the Apostle, who advises the honest and industrious man to add to the virtues he has attained the moral glory of charity,

reminds me of the impressions made on my mind in my youth, when visiting a German city, in which many monuments of ancient grandeur remind you of days of power, wealth, and splendor, that have gone by. In that ancient city, above the magnificent portal of the great public warehouse, which once contained in its spacious vaults the commercial riches of the country, there was the statue of a sainted knight, with his sword dividing his mantle to share it with the naked beggar before him. What a profound essay on the true philosophy of riches! What a living and moving illustration, though in stone, of the law of love written on the heart! What a glorious sermon, full of evangelic truth and fire, in the simple words of Zaccheus, "Behold, the half of my goods I give to the poor."

SERMON VI.

EPHESIANS IV. 28.

"Let him that stole steal no more; but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth."

I HAVE spoken of each of the three virtues, enjoined in the words of my text, considering each of them as a duty by itself. I shall now speak of their intimate connexion with each other. This connexion is so evident, that we need but look at the three admonitions of the Apostle, as they naturally grow out of one another, to perceive that they point out the three successive stages of a course of moral improvement. Indeed, I do not know of any passage in Scripture, that shows more clearly, that, in virtue, as well as in temptation and in sin, there are different degrees,—that there is a scale of merit as well as of guilt.

The Apostle admonishes the dishonest man to honesty, the honest to industry, the industrious to charity. In this scale of virtue, the first step towards moral conversion consists in resisting all temptations to theft and fraud, which may be strengthened by failure as well as by success.

Success encourages the timid beginner in iniquity

to continue in evil doing; and failure, instead of discouraging him, may stimulate his pride to engage in more artful and more daring attempts.

Every one has to learn to look upon his neighbour's property with a mind as free from any desire to encroach upon it, as he would have the minds of others in respect to his own; to wrestle with his criminal propensities, until, by habitual practice, honesty has become a part of his nature. But he, to whom the highest prize of dishonesty has ceased to be a bribe, is not superior to all temptations. He may be tempted to depend, for his daily bread, on the favor and charity of others, rather than on his own hard labor. The charms of indolence, the prospects of all the hardships connected with a life of honest industry, may tempt him to degrading sloth and unmanly dependence on others, which, by degrees, destroys the germ of self-respect in him, as, of his own accord, he becomes a pauper or a parasite.

The second step, then, in the moral conversion of one who has overcome the temptation to dishonesty, consists in resisting the charms of indolence, in working, be it with his hands or with his head, "the thing which is good," until labor itself becomes a source of delight to him, and indolence an object of disgust. But, though he have acquired the habit of working honestly for himself, he may feel tempted to keep the fruits of his labor for himself alone. The habit of honest industry is not sufficient to guard him against the suggestion of avarice, to lock up his heart, as firmly as his iron chest, against the most

moving entreaties of those who seek his help, and against the still more powerful appeal of the speechless sufferings of others.

Against the pure impulse of his heart, strengthened by the prompting of the Apostle to give to him that needeth, he may fortify himself, either by the fashionable sophism, that charity begets pauperism, and thus promotes the evil which it is intended to remove, or by a religious prejudice, which counsels him not to interfere with the regulations of Providence, that has made him rich and his neighbour destitute. These arguments against charity, suggested by a false philosophy, or by religious prejudice, however deficient in reason, are sufficient, when combined with a selfish disposition, to lead into temptation even an honest and industrious man. The very difficulties, which he has had to encounter in making his way in the world, may induce him to set an immoderate value on the fruits of his industry, and to suspect others, who have been less successful, of indiscretion or sloth, and may harden his heart against the intercession of Nature and of Scripture in behalf of the forsaken poor.

A new and continued moral effort, then, is required of him who has made himself free from the debasing influence of fraud and of sloth, to save him from the spirit of heartless calculation, from the soul-enslaving power of avarice.

Thus we see three different degrees of virtue, of temptation, and of sin, implied in the simple words of the Apostle. In the first place, the foundation of

moral character is to be laid by breaking the charm of dishonest gain. Then the honest man is advised, not to be satisfied with himself simply because he does not steal, but to work with his hands rather than depend on the undeserved favor of others to support him in habits of indolence. Finally, to complete his victory over temptation and vice, the honest and industrious man must expel, from the kingdom within, the arch-fiend, Selfishness. It is evident, that every step, in this moral ascent, must be gained by conquest over temptation, which, when defeated in one form, fails not to present itself in another more attractive or more formidable. The exercise of a virtue, which, at first, required all the effort of which we were capable, must be rendered easy by habit, that we may employ our whole moral strength for a new and more glorious conquest.

The Apostle, in pointing out the virtues of honesty, industry, and charity, as three different degrees of moral elevation, does not prescribe a course of improvement to be pursued, step by step, by each individual; nor does he intimate, that the whole moral destiny of man is comprehended in the successive attainment of those three virtues. He merely takes one striking instance of common occurrence, to exemplify the law of gradual improvement, which rules the moral as well as the physical world. All men are not tempted alike, but all men are tempted; and each individual, desirous of moral advancement, must lay the foundation of this inner temple on the

subjection of the grossest of his passions, that which binds him most closely down to earth, whether it be dishonesty, or intemperance, or cruelty, or lust. As for this first indispensable step from vice to virtue, every one can take it. The malefactor on the cross, acknowledging the justice of his sufferings, and putting his prayerful trust in Him, who expired praying for his murderers, took the first decided step from vice to virtue. There is hope for every sinner. There is, indeed, no dungeon, no place of torment contrived by human ingenuity, so deep and strong, so dark and lonely, as the solitary confinement of a guilty mind, shut out from all the ordinary excitements to virtue, from the esteem and sympathy of men, locked up within itself, guarded by keen and watchful appetites and unbending habits, wasting its strength in impotent endeavours to escape the consequences, while it dreads to encounter the causes, of sin. But, though riveted to vice by chains stronger than iron, still do not despair. Watch and pray without ceasing! And he, who called to the Apostle in prison, "Arise, gird thyself, and follow me!" — the voice of the redeeming angel will reach also you, in the fearful silence of your benighted soul. A light will shine in on your prison, and strength will be given you to break the chains forged, by your own criminal folly, to deprive a child of God of that glorious liberty, which belongs to the least as well as to the greatest in his kingdom.

I have said, that every one *can*, at any time, take the first decided step from vice to virtue. Every one can, and every one must, take it, if he would ad-

vance a single step beyond the brute. Let no one imagine, that he can make progress in virtue by studying the accomplishments, before he has mastered the rudiments, of morality. When we speak of lower and of higher virtues, let us guard against the dangerous mistake, of ascribing to the latter a greater importance, a higher practical value. This observation applies, with peculiar force, to the course of moral advancement pointed out by the Apostle in his admonition to go on from honesty to industry, from industry to charity. It is evident, that charity without industry is, in most cases, impracticable, and that, without honesty, both industry and charity are either a specious pretext, or a dangerous aliment, to vice. The indolent is less dangerous than the industrious knave; and he, who defrauds his creditors or his poor relations of their just claims and expectations, in order to indulge in the exercise of an extravagant charity, sacrifices principle to passion. It is an old observation, confirmed by daily experience, that men are more inclined to be charitable than to be just. We are all tempted to make the performance of a more agreeable duty an excuse for the neglect of a more arduous and disinterested virtue. But, however we may try to evade the moral law by a pretended collision of duties, the oracle in his own breast assures every one, that the God of mercy cannot be served by the sacrifice of his laws, and that the pure stream of genuine charity springs only from the eternal rock of justice.

But, though all moral progress must begin with the

stern and simple elements of duty, the prize, the crown of life, that awaits the conqueror, lies not in the beginning of our course. We should not be satisfied with washing out only the darkest stain in our moral character, but desire to put on the whole garment of holiness. The power you have gained over yourself by a single conquest will not secure to you even this, unless you perpetuate it by habit, and continually enlarge the boundaries of your moral government. As we should not despair of any human being, though dead in sin, as being debarred for ever from all chance of a moral resurrection, so let no human being, however exalted in the scale of virtue, yield to the dangerous presumption, that he is placed beyond the reach of temptation. No immortal being can fall so low, that he cannot rise again; no mortal being can rise so high, that he cannot fall. He may add to honesty industry, and to industry charity, yet the honest, the industrious, the charitable man is not superior to all the terrors and allurements of this world. He may be tempted to practise charity as an instrument of pride, ostentation, and ambition. His philanthropy, though proof against all the ordinary temptations of life, may waver, when the extraordinary man, who, by his wisdom or his heroism, has gained the implicit confidence of his fellow-men, is called upon to decide in his heart, whether he shall make himself the master of his brethren, and raise his family to the throne, or look upon the whole race of man as his family, and live the life of a servant, and die the death of a malefactor on the cross.

Thus, in every situation of life, and in every stage of our moral progress, we find new temptations and greater trials, requiring more powerful efforts than those, by which we have come off conquerors in previous conflicts with the enemy within. Every advancing step, on the mountain path of virtue, removes you farther from the baneful exhalations of the valley below, and enables you to look with calm satisfaction upon the past, and with cheerful anticipation forward to the endless future. But every advancing step must be gained and secured by constant and ever-increasing effort; and, as there is no depth of vice so low, that man, by his own will and strength, cannot rise above it, or sink still lower, so there is no degree of merit or virtue, that *fills* the measure of duty marked out by the words of Jesus, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect!" Our strength grows with our efforts; and as, in the moral world, every one is taxed strictly according to his ability, every increase of power entitles him to a more arduous undertaking, a more glorious reward.

Would you have an example of one, who, standing on a moral height, to which few men have dared to aspire, saw a still higher mark before him, — of one, who, having finished the work that the Lord had given him to do, begged for himself that he might die, but was called to perform a still greater duty, — look at the prophet Elijah. Look at him, standing on the mount of God, with the full consciousness of having fulfilled his commandments. He had braved the power of man; he did not dread the powers of na-

ture, but looked calmly on as the wind, the fire, and the earthquake were passing by. But he wrapped his face in his mantle, as he listened to that still, small voice, that came to ask of him an account of what he had done, and to charge him with a new and more dangerous mission. And thus every one of us, though rejoicing in the consciousness of having performed his duty, if he listen to that still, small voice, that bears witness to the purpose of God in the creation of man, will hear a voice of warning to him that standeth, to keep himself from falling, and a voice of encouragement to go on from strength to strength, and from glory to glory.

If you would see the whole destiny of man unfolded, the whole meaning of human experience set forth and exemplified, look into the life and character of our Saviour. He was tempted as we are. His life is a history of successive conquests over a series of trials, of terrors, and of allurements; each successive attack of the tempter calling forth a new and overpowering moral energy. Nay, in the midst of his sufferings, his soul was tried by a temptation more severe than the agonies of death. He felt that the power of God, which had been his support until that moment, was suddenly withdrawn, — that he was left alone, — and he exclaimed, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" In the midst of his agony he was left alone, that he might find in *himself* the strength that should enable him to endure to the end, to persist and to glory in that course which had led him to the cross, that he might render himself worthy of its enjoyment through all eternity.

With the precept of the Apostle and the example of the Saviour before us, we shall find, in every situation, in every season of life, aids and encouragements in that moral discipline, in which the moment of death appears but as a transition from a lower to a higher course of instruction. Enriched with the moral advantages of every season of life, with the teachable and confiding temper of childhood, with the vigor and enthusiasm of youth, with the active and determined spirit of manhood, with the judgment and tranquillity of age, we would present ourselves to that heavenly Teacher, whose recorded wisdom, excellence, and love have been our guide and our support in this life, trusting that he will lead us onward, and ever onward, through the ages of eternity.

SERMON VII.

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1 Corinthians ix. 22.

"I am made all things to all men."

"To the Jews," the Apostle says, "I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are without law, as without law, that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak; I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."

The same principle, which the Apostle Paul here represents as a guide of his own actions, he enjoins upon his followers. "Give no offence," he says to the Corinthian converts, "neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God; even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved."

This injunction, to become all things to all men, to accommodate our words and actions to the condition, habits, tastes, and opinions of those, on whose judgment and character we desire to exert a salutary influence, — this principle of universal accommodation, — how far can it be considered as a standing max-

im of human conduct? How did the Apostle who teaches this doctrine, how did he himself apply it in his various relations to Jews and Gentiles; to Christian converts, who still thought themselves bound by the Jewish law, and to others, who recognised no other standard than the morality of the Gospel?

He knew that the gospel was to the Jews a stumblingblock, and to the Greeks foolishness. The fact, that Christ suffered on the cross, and rose again from the dead, made the religion of Jesus a stumblingblock to the Jews, because it destroyed their ambitious hope of an earthly king, that should make them the nation of nations. The same doctrine was sufficient to discredit the new religion in the eyes of the Greek philosophers, to whom the assertion of a miracle was a proof of folly.

Did Paul, on this account, when pleading the cause of Christ before the bigoted Jewish multitude with their Priest Ananias, and before King Agrippa, or, on Mars' Hill, when addressing the Athenians, — did he deny, or qualify, or hold back the great doctrine, that Christ suffered, and was raised again from the dead, because he thought it his duty to become all things to all men?

Again, we are told, that, when Peter was at Antioch, he did eat with the Gentiles; but, when certain came from James, he withdrew, and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. Did not Peter then carry out the principle of universal accommodation, that very injunction of Paul, to become a Jew to the Jews, and a Gentile to the

Gentiles? But how was it, that Paul, instead of approving the conduct of his fellow-apostle, withstood him to the face, and openly blamed him for his dissembling before Jews and Gentiles?

The true intent of the apostolic injunction is manifest, also, in the conduct of Jesus, when he was asked to pay tribute at Capernaum. Jesus directed Peter to pay what was demanded, assigning this as a sufficient reason, "lest we should offend them"; yet not till after having first declared, that he was not in justice bound to comply with the requisition.

The true intent of the Apostle's injunction appears in his conduct toward those, among the early Christians, who still held themselves bound by those prohibitions of the Mosaic law, which declared certain kinds of meat as unclean, and who, therefore, when residing in heathen lands, abstained from meat entirely. He tells them, that to him who esteemeth a thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean; he admonishes even those, who thought themselves free to eat all things, to wave their moral rights, and abstain, if by partaking they should wound the feelings of those, whose consciences would permit them to eat only herbs. But, lest this adaptation to the feelings and consciences of others should be misunderstood, the Apostle takes care frankly to declare his own faith, saying, that he knows and is persuaded, that nothing is of itself unclean, and that, in the strength of this faith, he feels at liberty to eat, or not to eat, as he chooses. But, if any convert to Christianity should abstain from meat that was unclean

according to the Mosaic law, or from meat that had been offered to idols, merely because he happened to be in company with those who thought themselves defiled by so doing, and under circumstances which must lead them to suppose, that he abstained, not from a tender regard for their feelings, but because, like them, he thought those things unclean in themselves, he would confirm what *he* considers superstition, and become guilty of hypocrisy.

Still more; the Jews expected an earthly Messiah, and the *literal* sense of the old prophecies concerning the great deliverer justified the expectation of the people. How was it, that Jesus, instead of making himself a Jew to the Jews, to promote the great object of their national ambition, thwarted and annihilated their highest hopes, by living the life of a servant, and dying the death of a malefactor?

I have brought forward these examples, to show the manner, or rather the limits within which the injunction of the Apostle, to become all things to all men, was carried into effect by himself, as well as by his divine Master. From these examples it is manifest in the first place, that the Apostle did *not* enjoin, or permit, or excuse, any species of false appearance, any partial suppression, or deceptive coloring, of our real sentiments, for the purpose of recommending them to persons opposed in principle. The advice of the Apostle, to try to please all men, does not authorize or allow me, being a Unitarian, even for the purpose of gaining or saving some, to pass myself off among Trinitarians, as a Trinitarian, either by am-

biguous words, or by an equivocal silence. And, if I were to preach any doctrine different from that which my own reason authorizes, I should in vain resort to our text to save me from the upbraidings of my conscience. The same must be true with regard to our political principles, as well as to the sentiments we entertain in our private and domestic relations. Shall I not defend an absent friend, lest I should give offence to his enemies; or shall I not defend the truth, for fear of converting many of my personal friends into enemies? Carry out this principle of accommodation to the opinions, interests, and purposes of other men, in its whole extent, and all the reformers and martyrs must be ranked among criminals or madmen.

The truth is, — and it needs but a moment of dispassionate reflection to perceive it, — that the apostolic injunction, to become all things to all men, applies to the *manner*, rather than to the *matter*, of our communications to our fellow-men; not *what* we shall say or do, but *how* we shall say or do it, comes properly under the principle of accommodation or adaptation. St. Paul preached the same gospel to Jews and Gentiles. But, when he spake before King Agrippa, who believed in the Law and the Prophets, he appealed to the testimony of Moses and the Prophets concerning Jesus Christ. On the other hand, when he addressed the pagans of Lycaonia, he appealed to the great truths of natural religion. He endeavoured, as the writer of the Acts informs us, to turn them from their "vanities unto the living God,

which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein," — to Him, who, even while they had forsaken him, serving idols, had never forsaken them; doing them good, giving them rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with gladness. In the same manner, when Paul addressed the Athenians, he spake not of the God of the Jews, but of the Lord of heaven and earth, who "hath made of one blood all nations of men." Instead of applying to the Hebrew Scriptures, he quoted their own heathen poets, to bring home to their hearts the great truth of natural religion, that "we are the offspring of God."

It would be needless to multiply examples and illustrations from Scripture for the purpose of showing, that the Apostle, in representing himself as "being made all things to all men," and recommending the same to others, did not intend to countenance a servile adaptation of principle to shifting expediency. The principle he recommends, stands, in fact, on the same ground with the obvious propriety and necessity of speaking to every one, to whom we wish to reveal what is in our own mind and heart, not in an unknown tongue, but in a language which he understands. The sense of this passage, then, is plain. But, in its practical bearing, this principle of adaptation is a rule of conduct, which few men carry out, or even consider and appreciate, in their intercourse with their fellow-men. We are apt to overlook, that the various circumstances and conditions of life, all the different forms of character, modes of thinking, and states of

feeling, have each a language of its own, which is the true confidential mediator between mind and mind, heart and heart. Let us look at this principle in its application to some of the chief stages and conditions of human existence.

Childhood has a language of its own; that is, religion, as well as every other moral and intellectual truth, must be represented in a manner that shall enlist the sympathy, and take fast hold of the inmost conviction, of the child. In order to bring home to little children the great principles on which the destinies of man depend; in order to make them truly sensible of the relation they sustain to the spiritual world and the Father of spirits, it is necessary to make the little world of their senses, affections, hopes, and fears, the expositor of the infinite system, the world without end, in which, unconscious to themselves, they have actually begun to live, and move, and have their being.

It is, of course, necessary to avoid all abstract terms. If you tell a little child, that God is the Supreme Being, the great First Cause of all things, the Sovereign of the Universe, you speak to him in an unknown tongue. But if you speak to him of the Father of all; of Him who made sun, moon, and stars; the earth and the sea; plants, animals, and men; if you present to the child the things themselves, instead of requiring him to form correct ideas of things from their shadows, that is, from mere abstractions, you will find, that it was not without an intimate knowledge of the nature, even the religious

nature of the child, that Jesus said, that the things, which are hidden from the wise and prudent of this world, are revealed unto babes. Thus, the parental relation, imperfect though it be among men, is the most perfect revelation of God in his relation to mankind. And who is there, that understands and feels so fully and deeply the importance of parental support, guidance, and love, as a dependent child? Still more, childhood is the season of learning, of physical and mental progress. It is easy to give to that curiosity, which is the soul of learning, a *religious* character; to kindle an enthusiasm for endless progress in the heart of the little learner.

Again; the love, which binds the child to his brothers and sisters, may be enlarged into brotherly affection for every member of the human family, nay, for every fellow-creature. Thus, every truth of religion may be made to take root in the heart of the child, if it be but planted with wise and careful reference to the soil in which it is to grow.

It is a sad mistake to suppose, that only the surface of human knowledge is adapted to the capacity of children, and that superficial minds are capable of instructing them. It is elementary, not superficial information, that is fit nourishment for children.

He who sets out to be a religious instructer without a decided purpose to come at the elements, the simple truth, as it is in nature and in Scripture, to him we would say, in the words of the woman of Samaria, "The well is deep, and you have nothing to draw with." Besides, the instruction must be adapt-

ed, not only to children in general, but to each individual. Every child requires *a catechism* of its own; not a set formulary of questions and answers, made up beforehand for all occasions; but a living catechism, in which every question should be the result of the preceding answer. In education, most especially in religious education, it should never be forgotten, that, though it is the part of the teacher to furnish the *matter*, yet, with regard to the *manner*, the ignorance of the child should guide the wisdom of the instructer.

Youth has a language of its own, a process of spiritual assimilation, by which it appropriates every thing that agrees with its glowing affections, bold inquiries, and boundless aspirations. Religion, if it be communicated in the natural language of youth, presents to the ardent disposition a field, in which the most daring dreams of greatness and power may be realized, without envy, strife, and selfish competition. It kindles a divine ambition. Instead of deadening the passions, it infuses into them a deathless element, the fire of inspiration, of holy love, that purifies and frees them from every selfish, earthly admixture. The generous love of freedom, that is indigenous to the youthful heart, grows under the expanding influence of religion into an enlarged and ever-enlarging principle of philanthropy, which is the only unquestionable manifestation of the love of God, as exhibited in the love of all his children.

Manhood has a language of its own. Religion is a practical principle; and, as such, it is fitted to influ-

ence the active season of life. The great pressure of all the duties of active life, from the burial of their fathers to the rearing of their offspring, falls upon the adult generation. Such a weight of duty and responsibility requires proportionate depth of character. There is no safety in the shallows of worldly maxims and the shifting winds of expediency. There is safety only in the wide sea-room and steady depth of eternal and universal principles. To reveal these, is the great object of religion. If religion is to be made all things to all men, that is, if it is to be brought home to every one in that form, which is likely to make the strongest and most salutary impression, the language, the form, in which religion should dispense its arguments, counsels, rebukes, and encouragements to the adult, should be fitted to quicken and deepen the sense of responsibility. The great truth, that the slightest neglect of duty, or faintest moral effort, has a decided effect, not only upon the feelings of the moment, creating a transient satisfaction or discontent, but upon our character, and consequently upon the future, the endless future of our being, — the consideration, that, when I cast off this garment of flesh, the deeds done in the flesh are not obliterated, — the fearful thought, that, when the body is in the ground, the shadow of the soul, my own unworthiness, still cleaves to me, and will appear with me before the judgment-seat, — this thought is enough to startle, to rouse, the most thoughtless, the most indifferent, the most sunken, to a sense of himself, to a recollection of his origin, to an anticipation of his destiny.

Old age, too, has a language peculiarly appropriate to itself. Old age is the season of contemplation, as manhood is that of action. It is related, in Genesis, that God, in six days, created heaven and earth, and seeing every thing that he had made, that it was very good, he rested on the seventh, and blessed the sabbath day. The history of human life may be likened to that of the creation of the world. Youth and manhood are the days of creation ; old age is the sabbath of life. It is a privilege of the old to rest from toil, to contemplate all their works, and, if they have done their part in time past, to enjoy the unspeakable blessing of seeing that their works were good.

Old age is the time allotted to cast the account, which we must render up on the great day of retribution, before the judgment-seat of God. Instead of exacting, from the few hours that remain to us, a last tribute to our vanity, our spoiled senses, our still unsatisfied passions, religion bids us to use them for a last serious look upon the past, the present, and the future. It bids us make our last will, — our last will, not only concerning the things we leave behind, but concerning those which we carry with us into eternity. It may be too late to increase our capital of knowledge, of righteousness, of benevolence, which is to be our outfit for the life to come ; yet there may be time to lessen our debts, — our prejudices, our evil propensities, our selfish practices. It may no longer be in our power to put on the gospel armour of righteousness, or the wedding garment of holiness ; yet it is in our power, even to the last, to cover our moral nakedness with the sackcloth of repentance.

I have endeavoured to show, that the Apostle, in admonishing us to become all things to all men, does not sanction or admit a servile condescension to the prejudices and passions of men. He does not authorize or permit a Christian teacher to flatter or spare, either the sovereign many or the influential few, or to cover up with a mantle of charity, falsely so called, the master vices, while he exposes, with a safe effort of courage, some of the minor deformities, in the character of men and of society.

The text bids us impart to all men, according to their moral and personal wants, weaknesses, and diseases, such food, or such medicine, as will support or restore and save them. It bids us accomplish, by natural means, what, on the day of Pentecost, was set forth by a miracle. For as, at that time, multitudes, from different parts of the world, heard the same truth preached to each of them in his own language, so should we endeavour to bring home to every one, to the child, the youth, the adult, the aged, to the skeptic and to the believer, to the righteous and to the sinner, to each, in the vernacular of his own soul, the glad tidings of truth and salvation.

SERMON VIII.

ECCLESIASTES XI. 7.

"Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun."

WHAT heart is there, what human heart, that does not receive with acclamation, and reiterate with rapture, the sentiment expressed in my text. Its truth is felt, not only by us, who are able to reason upon what we feel, and set it forth in language; and, when we rejoice in the blessed light of heaven, it is not only for ourselves that we rejoice. Man is the heaven-appointed interpreter and spokesman of the mute creation. Every thing that lives and breathes, the inhabitants of the mighty deep, emerging from their dark chambers to revel in the life-giving splendor that moves on the face of the waters; the wild animals, coming forth from the coverts of the forest to sport in the bright openings, or on the sunny hills; the insects, basking in the transparent element, of which they themselves seem to be a living manifestation; nay, the very plants, stretching forth their torpid limbs towards the scantiest allowance of light,—seem as if they would break the deep silence of insensibility, to burst forth in the universal language of Nature and

of Scripture; "Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun."

The text sets before us one of the simplest and greatest of God's blessings, from which none of his children, not even the poorest, nay, the most ungrateful, are excluded. And is not the thought, that the light of the sun, which shines upon the prosperous and the happy, is poured out with equal profusion upon the poor and the wretched,—is not this thought calculated to blend, with the mere physical gratification, a high moral and religious enjoyment? Does it not make us hail the holy light with deeper and purer joy, when we see it reflected from eyes that have become habituated to darkness and to tears?

Still more, if any proof were needed to show the divine origin of this inestimable blessing, it might be found in the fact, that it is not withheld even from him who has rendered himself unworthy of its enjoyment. For He, who, in the beginning, said, "Let there be light," still "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good." And surely, if any thing has power to touch and soften the hardest heart, it is the free and full concession of benefits of which we have rendered ourselves unworthy. I believe experience, if we could but know every case in point, would justify the assertion, that the exertions and contrivances of men, "who have compassed sea and land to make one proselyte," or to convert a sinner, have done less for the cause of religion and morality, than the silent influence of the common bounties of nature.

There are few men, whose hearts have become so wholly untrue to themselves, as not to feel, and (at times at least) gratefully to acknowledge, the bountiful provisions of the parent earth that still supports us, the enlivening, quickening, and soothing influence of the air we breathe, and the light that is shed on our path; in short, all those every-day blessings, which come to us, unasked and unmerited, from Him, who "giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not." Every ray of light, every breath of air, while it gladdens our eyes, and refreshes and invigorates our frame, does it not also speak to our hearts? The spirit of harmony, that pervades all the works of God, appointing to every creature its task and its reward, calls forth, in the heart that is *at peace* with itself, all its unconscious powers and sensibilities; it blends with all our labors, attainments, and prayers. But, to the heart that is full of discord, the harmony that reigns without is fraught with reproof; with keen and searching, yet with gentle and encouraging reproof. I have known men, who, by continual disregard of duty, had learned to turn a deaf ear to the earnest remonstrances and the silent sorrows of their friends, to the exultations of their enemies, and the withdrawal of public confidence; yet, perhaps, a walk in the country on a summer morning, which reveals to the regenerated senses a new earth and a new heaven, — a look around him, — called up in the apostate heart the thought of that infinite mercy, which does not withdraw its benefits, nor the capacity of enjoyment, from him who has forfeited all by disobedience. And this

single thought, urged upon the mind of the sinner by the multitude of his blessings, was enough to melt stern manhood into childhood. The man, who has gone long and far in the pursuit of selfish pleasure, feels that he indeed is no longer the light-hearted being, that once stood uncommitted, in the freshness of innocence, on the critical spot, where the way of life divides to the right hand and to the left. Yet the sun, that shines upon his degradation, is still the same that shone on the plays of his childhood. He touches the hem of the living garment of nature, and a healing power goes forth to quicken the wounded spirit. He knows, that the same path, that has led him on and on in his course of disobedience, will bring him back to virtue, if he will but turn and resolutely meet the temptations, which smooth and cheer the way of the sinner, but dispute and obstruct the return of the penitent. Every blessing, which reminds him of his ingratitude, is also an assurance, that the arms of Him, who seeth the heart, are still open to receive the penitent child.

"Truly the light is sweet," not only for its own sake, but because it leads the mind from the experience of one, to the contemplation of the innumerable host of blessings, which, in the moral government of God, are made to minister to the happiness of man. What a world, teeming with objects of interest, wonder, and delight, is revealed to us by our five senses. And yet this world of the senses, how poor is it, when compared with the inexhaustible sources of joy within us; with the sublime efforts of

reason, with the imperishable treasures of the affections, the joys of conscience, the attainments of virtue, the ascension of the soul in prayer. The organization of our bodies and our minds, as well as the constitution of the universe, leads to the conclusion, that all things around us and within us are suited continually to excite, and continually to gratify, that unquenchable thirst after happiness, which is the moving principle of all our feelings, thoughts, and actions.

It is true, our senses, our reason, our affections, and our wills, are sources of pain as well as pleasure. But if you deduct those sufferings, which have their origin in crime, for which the criminal alone is answerable, and to the gratuitous folly of men, you will rest satisfied, that the blessings far outnumber the evils of life, and many, if not most of these evils, if you consider them well, are but the growing-pains of happiness. Moreover, all our past tribulations, by the wonder-working power of memory, are brought back to us transformed into pleasures. In the midst of afflictions, we are comforted by the thought, that our present sorrows, if we bear them well, will one day come back to us as reconciled enemies. And, if this be not sufficient to support us under present calamities, the thought, that this life is but one of the changing seasons of ēternity, and that what we sow in tears, we shall reap in joy, is able to remove from our mind every doubt as to our destiny for endless, progressive happiness.

To go on from one degree of happiness to another, to go on for ever, this is our destiny, the law of our

being; yet it is not a physical law, a blind, impelling force, an unerring instinct. For we have it in our power to render ourselves unutterably miserable, to go on in a course of ever-increasing degradation, to turn our senses into avenues of excruciating pain by intemperance and sinful indulgence, to abuse and pervert our reason, to betray or poison the holiest affections, to transform our conscience into a demon of vengeance, to turn our prayers into curses, cursing the light of the sun, and the day when it lighted us into existence. I say, our destiny, the law of our being, is not a physical, but a moral law; not an instinct, but a mission, a sacred trust, for which we are responsible.

When we say, that the pursuit of happiness, the greatest happiness of which he is capable, is the duty, the moral destiny of man, we are aware, that this principle is liable to objections, and, what is worse, to dangerous misunderstandings. Happiness must not be confounded with pleasure. If, by pleasure, we mean the gratification of our senses or appetites, we should define happiness as the satisfaction which attends the progress of the mind's perfection. Accordingly, I do not call the intemperate man, the sensualist, a happy man, any more than I call him, who attempts or commits suicide, a courageous man. I do not feel tempted to confound the feverish excitement of impure pleasure with true, healthful happiness, any more than I feel tempted to mistake the destructive flashes of lightning for the blessed light of the sun. I know, that the cup of pleasure, in the unholy hand,

will soon be followed by a cup, which when it shall be set before the unhappy votary of pleasure, he shall pray with anguish, but pray in vain, that it may pass from him. Again; I do not call him happy, who rejoices in successful deceits, who glories in a dishonest bargain. For I know, and his own conscience by its secret misgivings shows knowledge, that, in all our bargains, in all our most private transactions, there is present, unseen, yet all-seeing, an unerring witness, who will be our final judge. I do not call him happy, who builds up a great name for himself by destroying the honest name of his rival. I do not call those happy, or, if they be called so by others, I do not envy or covet their happiness, who look down upon any of their fellow-men with contempt. No; and my whole soul responds to the truth-inspired saying, "Envy thou not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways."

The pleasures of intemperance, dishonesty, envy, pride, and oppression, are sources of unhappiness. If we hold fast this distinction, the philosophical inquiry, whether a man ought to act with a view to moral perfection, or with a view to happiness, that is, moral satisfaction, is a speculative question of little moral importance. When we speak of the pursuit of happiness as a duty, and recommend that course of action which is productive of the greatest satisfaction, we take into consideration, not merely the interests of the passing moment, not merely the narrow circle of our selfish advantages, but the eternity of our being, and the ever-growing nature of all our

faculties, energies, and affections. We believe *that* course of action the most productive of happiness, which is productive of the greatest good, not only to ourselves, but to all our fellow-beings. We recommend a course of action, that shall induce us to sacrifice our selfish pleasures and comforts, property and ease, nay, health and life, for the enduring interests of the mind and the heart, for the promotion of truth, for the establishment of justice, for universal salvation from oppression, prejudice, and sin. He, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, — he is the guide, his example is the way to general happiness. It is not from an unnatural leaning to austerity and gloom, that Christianity demands the sacrifice of pleasures of the senses which hurt the soul, but from a more intense love of happiness. That view of Christianity, which would make it appear as requiring or commending sacrifices of pleasure, merely because it is thought meritorious to mortify the flesh, even if it be not necessary for any intellectual or moral good to be obtained by the sacrifice; — this amateur martyrdom, which frowns upon every innocent enjoyment of life, is not a genuine, but a counterfeit, representation of gospel morality. It is the offspring of a gloomy theology, a religious misanthropy, which looks upon human nature as fallen, and upon all nature as involved in the fall of the first man, a theology which has turned many benevolent men, Christians at heart, into philosophical infidels.

Christianity is a religion of *joy*. As such it was announced by the angelic heralds to the shepherds

of Judea; "Fear not; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." As such, Christ's doctrine was delivered by himself to his disciples, when he said to them, "I have spoken to you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." And the joys with which Jesus sympathized were not only those which he alone could fully know, the happiness of a pure heart, the felicity of a life devoted to the cause of man and of God. Humanity, with all its pleasures as well as sorrows, was dear to the friend of man. "My joy is the joy of you all." This generous sentiment was exemplified in all his intercourse with his fellow-men. He partook of their customary entertainments; he used even his miraculous gifts to heighten the joy of the wedding feast; nay, he made bread and wine the emblems and memorials of his death. He called the attention of his disciples not only to those joys which spring from the sacrifice of other enjoyments. He directed their attention to the sun and the rain as dispensations of universal good; to the spreading tree, in whose branches the birds of the air find shelter and lodging; nay, to the lilies of the field, which, in their unobtrusive array, according to him, surpass the Jewish *beau idéal* of earthly splendor and glory.

It is nature, it is the principle of life within us, that teaches us to find pleasure in beholding the light of the sun; it is religion, it is Christianity, that teaches us to find sunshine in every thing. A person once observed to a portrait painter, that his exquisite taste for beauti-

ful forms must be frequently offended in the exercise of his art. The painter, whose art had made him a skilful physiognomist, replied, "that he had never seen the human face in which he could not discover some beauty." My friends, the truth contained in this observation applies to the inward, as well as to the outward countenance of man; and happy would it be for us, in our intercourse with the world, if, instead of studying only the foibles and vicious propensities of men, by the knowledge of which we may, perhaps, advance our own selfish interests, we would learn the art of the physiognomical painter, the practice of which, as it would enable us to discover truth, goodness, and beauty in all the sentiments and characters of our fellow-men, would impress the lineaments of pure benevolence upon our hearts. Even in the only thing on earth, that is absolutely deformed and intrinsically hateful, even in *sin*, we discover the abuse of that moral freedom, which is the living root of virtue as well as of vice; and there is no character, if thoroughly known, that is so blended and identified with evil, as not to preserve some redeeming feature, that should temper our moral indignation with tender sympathy. Still further, I believe, that the more we know of the world, and the more thoroughly we learn to understand the characters of men, the more shall we be convinced, that more of the evil is only apparent, and that there is more of essential goodness. And, if "the light is sweet, and it is pleasant for the eyes to behold the sun," it is sweeter and pleasanter still to behold the rays of the

sun of truth and righteousness breaking forth from the depths of the inward heaven, and dispelling the clouds of error and of sin, that prevented our imperfect vision from discovering the image of God in man.

Then, while we behold with delight the forms of beauty, which the light of the sun reveals to our eyes, let us try to acquire an eye for moral beauty; and then the whole creation will appear to us as it is, the living countenance of God; and, though we now behold him but as through a glass darkly, our inward vision will gather strength to see him face to face.

SERMON IX.

JOHN I. 9.

"The true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."

IN my morning discourse I dwelt on the sentiment, expressed by the Preacher, that "it is a pleasant thing for the eyes to behold the light of the sun." Truly the light is sweet to those who enjoy it. But, while some are rejoicing in the light of the sun, others are wrapt in darkness. And the same imperfect dispensation, and, for the time at least, partial distribution, characterizes every natural good, every earthly blessing. Disappointment, poverty, sickness, and death, all the innumerable forms of human misery, follow close upon affluence, health, hope, and joy, even as the shadows of the night encroach upon the receding rays of the sun. Who is there, that has not, many, many times in his life, been prompted to exclaim, "When I looked for good, then evil came unto me; and when I waited for light, there came darkness." And, though the stern discipline of experience be relaxed at times, and fond indulgence with rich almsgiving take the place of tasks and denials, there is something in the soul of man that is not satisfied with the

transient favors which prosperity scatters on his path; something which, not discouraged and silenced by experience, prompts him to long and to strive after a world of light, in which there is no darkness, but all darkness is swallowed up in light.

But the Saviour saith, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation; neither shall they say, Lo here! or, Lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you." That world of light without darkness, after which the soul is longing, is not to be found without. It is neither in the distant past, nor in the remote future. It is neither a golden age, of which the poets sing, nor a millennium, announced by the enthusiast. It is either nowhere or everywhere; because, if anywhere, it is within us. Religion, the faith of Jesus, the belief in God, immortality, and retribution, conceived in the heart, and manifested in action, — this is the true light which God has ordained, not only like the great luminary, that shines upon some men while others are sitting in darkness, but to light every man that cometh into the world; to guide the steps of childhood and of helpless age; to purify the passions of the youth, and quicken the responsibility of the man; to dispel the doubts of the skeptic, to dry the tears of the penitent, to warm the heart that is chilled by the false friendships or heartless indifference of the world; to raise the sinking eye of the martyr; to open a heaven, above these visible heavens, to the dying saint.

The adaptation of religion to all situations and seasons of life, to every state of the mind and the heart,

is a subject of incalculable magnitude. I shall confine myself, at present, to the peculiar influence of religion upon childhood, youth, manhood, and age.

Religion, Christianity, is the true light of childhood. Childhood is ever standing on the top of Mount Pisgah, straining its unpractised vision in search of the Promised Land; or planting an Eden for itself, with the tree of life in the midst of the garden, and without the tree of knowledge of good and evil. How full of meaning is that providential conformation of the human mind, by which it is capable of rising at once to the apprehension of the highest truth, at a period when it is too weak to take any of the intermediate steps, pointed out by the light of science. This early religious susceptibility was not hidden from him who knew all that is in man. It was the proud distinction of the celebrated sages of the old world, to have instructed the highest minds, the wisest men, in the sublimest truths; it is the distinctive glory of Christianity to have revealed them unto babes. Christianity being intended to be a guide of life, a system of education, designed for every period of man's existence, the first object of the eternal mission is childhood. The same arms, that are stretched forth to support the man, when sinking in the stormy waters of temptation, are held out to receive little children and bless them. It is not merely by instruction, and precept, and admonition, which may be sufficient as means of education for later periods of life; it is by his own example, it is as the child Jesus, that Christ is the perfect teacher, the unerring guide, of

childhood. The child learns, that Jesus, too, was subject to his parents, that he was himself a good, obedient child. And when he reads, how, at one time, the parents sought him sorrowing, and how he, all this time, was sitting in the temple among the wisest men of his nation, answering and asking questions, and how his parents at last found him, and, when they upbraided him, he expressed surprise, that they should not know where to find him, that they wist not that he must be about his Father's business, — does not this simple narrative, unconsciously, infallibly, lead the mind of the young disciple to the same temple? Does it not teach the child, while subject to his father and his mother, to seek the face of Him, to whom they themselves look up as the universal Parent? Will it not make children love to obey their earthly parents better, if they know, that this is the first act of homage to their heavenly Father, and that to learn wisdom of all who are able to impart it, is doing their Father's business? It is through the Gospel, that the intimate connexion of children with their earthly parents becomes to them a revelation of their relation to their heavenly Father. It is through the Gospel, that the love of his brothers and sisters becomes to the little child the first practical lesson in philanthropy, and devotion to the whole innumerable family of God.

Docility is the characteristic of childhood; enthusiasm is the animating principle of youth. By enthusiasm, I mean that spontaneous, unreserved, exuberant, and unbounded ardor, without which nothing

truly great has ever been accomplished or undertaken, whether it be directed to any branch of industry and useful labor, or to poetry, philosophy, or religion. But enthusiasm is only the impelling and moving power; it depends on the object to which it is directed, whether it be conducive to good or evil. Though naturally allied to benevolence, enthusiasm may assume a mercenary character, by enlisting in the service of ambition, avarice, or any other selfish and sensual desire. It is, therefore, the element of greatness in evil as well as in good. To preserve the fire of enthusiasm, in the youthful mind, free from the admixture of bad passions, and from the contracting influence of selfish interests, this is the holy office of religion. It is the benign influence of that true light, illuminating every path of life, and penetrating our inmost being, which prevents those powers, which were intended to be the promoters of the highest good to man, from becoming the instruments of the greatest evil, or being wasted in unprofitable dreams.

To counteract the influence of the appetites, at a time of life when they are most powerful, to keep the eye of the mind single, religion calls up the image of innocent childhood. Before the youthful mind, that is inflamed with desire, and disturbed by the strife of appetites and passions contending for supremacy, religion places a little child, and declares, that of such, and such alone, is the kingdom of heaven. The innocence of childhood, as it arises from unacquaintance with evil, is in itself neither moral nor immoral; and harm has been done to the cause of morality and re-

ligion, and the character of children has been divested of its sweet simplicity and artless unreserve, by enthusiasts, who have represented the innocence, or the absence of moral evil, in the child, as a virtue. Innocence is a virtue only in those who are tempted to evil. But to those who are tempted, the sight of the image of *natural* purity as it exists in the infant, is a powerful and affecting impulse to strive after *moral* purity, and thus to attain to that divine blessing which the Saviour has promised to the pure in heart. It was a profound knowledge of this suggestive power, that dwells in every thing, as it comes pure from the hand of the Creator, which induced Jesus to place a little child in the midst of the disciples, contending with each other which of them should be greatest. But more powerful than the native purity of the child that knows no evil, is the childlike innocence of the man that knows both good and evil. It is for this reason, that the man Jesus is to us the most exalted object of admiration, and the most powerful incentive to virtue. Truly, if the wise men from the East, who saw and followed his star, had reason to reverence the child endowed with power to fulfil the desires of a hoping world; if they had reason to offer precious gifts, as tokens of homage to the promised Saviour, — how much stronger is our obligation, his mission being fulfilled and his work done, — how much greater is our obligation, with his glorious example before us, outshining every star in the moral firmament, to offer the most precious gifts, to give our hearts to him, who says to all, "Come and follow me."

I have spoken of the purifying influence of Christianity on the feelings and passions when their power is greatest, in the season of youth. Religion not only purifies, but enlarges and enlightens the spirit. That youthful enthusiasm, which naturally repels every thing mean and sordid, is apt to lose itself in senseless prodigality, ostentation, or false ambition, unless religion places before it the great and permanent objects of life, and wins the heart for the cause of truth and justice, freedom and benevolence, throughout the world. Every generous impulse and benevolent enterprise, friendship and philanthropy, flourish under the influence of that true light, which is the same in every season of life, unfolding all the powers, and furthering the perpetual growth of our moral, intellectual, and spiritual nature.

The mature age, the period of manhood and womanhood, is the season of the most intense moral responsibility. This is the time to try the work of the generous purposes and devoted affections, formed and cherished in the season of youth. All the moral dangers, for which we had prepared ourselves beforehand, — losses to be incurred by faithfulness to our engagements, favor to be forfeited by a resolute adherence to principle, detraction and persecution to be called forth by a conscientious declaration of unpalatable and unpopular truth, — all these giant assailants of our half-grown virtue must be met, no longer as fearful possibilities, but as undeniable and unavoidable realities. What is it that saves the man, in these trials, from substituting a set of worldly, ac-

commodating, midway principles, for those uncompromising rules of rectitude, to which he had dedicated himself in the holy enthusiasm of his youth? What saves his moral sense from the artful illusions of self-love, shifting the eternal landmarks between truth and falsehood, right and wrong? There is something within him, which bears witness to the saying of Christ, that "every one that doeth evil hateth the light; but he that doeth truth cometh to the light," — which reveals to him, towering high above the thrones of ambition and the scaffold of martyrdom, the judgment-seat of God. All the allurements of life, rendered more dazzling by their reflection in his eager imagination, all the terrors of the world looming in the misty atmosphere of an anxious heart, vanish before the real glories and real terrors that appear on the right hand and on the left of the uncompromising Judge. Thus, when virtue grows faint with hopeless toil, and selfish, worldly policy rejoices in the fulfilment of its prophecies, the true light, the light of divine truth, scatters the clouds that rest upon the distant prospect; it shows, that the days of prosperity are numbered, that those, who have devoted their best efforts to a thankless soil, have not labored in vain, "that God has sown light for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." To quicken and strengthen the sense of responsibility, under the discouragements of a partial distribution of good and evil in this world, — this is the peculiar benefit, the most important aid, which religion affords to those who have to bear the great weight of all the cares

and duties of active life. This is its mission to the middle-aged; and now, what prospect does that true light open to those who are approaching the end of their earthly pilgrimage?

When the wise man said, that "the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, 'I have no pleasure in them,'" he spoke only of a part, and not of the best part, of our pleasures. What though "our feet stumble on the dark mountains," the spirit, that walks by faith, confidently and boldly obeys the voice that said to the Prophet, "Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord." What though "the sun," that shone bright on the pleasures of youth, "be darkened,"

> "The sad and solemn night
> Has yet her multitude of cheerful fires."

Old age is the season of contemplation and mature philanthropy. It is true, that, if the docility of childhood, the seed-time of life, has passed without improvement; if the generous warmth of youth has given rise only to dreams of selfish ambition; if the period of manhood has been marked by a heartless love of gain and an unprincipled shrewdness,—then there is nothing so dangerous to the active, so heart-chilling and yet so seductive to the young, as the counsel and example of him, who profanes the honor of the hoary head by trying to remove the bashful shrinking from tempted youthful virtue, and to sanction the cold calculations of mature selfishness. But, if old age be the close of a life well spent; if it be the repository of a harvest that was sown, and flourished, and ri-

pened, in the three preceding seasons, — then old age is the teacher of childhood, the guide of youth, the counsellor of manhood; it is the historian of the past, and the prophet of the future.

Childishness is a disease of the mind; but the childlike simplicity of old age is the consummation of wisdom; it is the fulfilment of the prophecy, that "of such is the kingdom of heaven"; yea, it is the beginning of celestial childhood.

My friends, I have opened before you the book of the seasons of life; and from its living pages I have endeavoured to show, what is the peculiar productive power and fitness of every period, under the influence of that "true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." It is, indeed, "the light of life." Let us open our minds to its genial rays, and our hearts to its inspiring influence, and direct our footsteps by its unerring guidance, till our whole being is penetrated and regenerated by its divine energy. Let us walk in the light while it shines full upon us on this side of that vast ocean, trusting that its guidance will not be wanting, when we shall enter upon the other hemisphere that is wrapt in impenetrable night. Enriched with the genuine products of every season of life, — with the docility of childhood, the pure enthusiasm of youth, the determined character of manhood, and the serene wisdom of age, — let us present ourselves before the great Teacher, whose Gospel has been the light of our life, trusting, that he will lead us onward through the ages of eternity.

SERMON X.

2 Corinthians ix. 6.

"This I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully."

The dictate of sound reason, that the greatness of the reward should be proportioned to the services of the laborer, (the Bible doctrine, that, "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap,") this doctrine is so plain and self-evident, that men would be tempted to doubt the common sense of the philosopher who should seriously set out to *prove* it. It is the common rule of work throughout the world, the foundation of all fair dealing among men; it is just in itself, and must therefore be true for this life as well as for the future.

If it is true, then, that our condition in the world to come, that the amount of future weal or woe, will be allotted to each one of us according to his deeds, his moral industry, how is it, that the thought of that last solemn reckoning so seldom enters our minds? or, if it be urged upon us at times by the earnest pleading of conscience, it is put to rest by the answer of Felix, "We will hear thee at a more convenient season." Men are wise enough to look to their own affairs, to take advantage of every chance

and of their superior knowledge, that their account-book, at the end of the year, may show a balance in their favor. But they are not wise, nay, not politic enough, to take advantage of their highest knowledge, and remember the great book of accounts, in which every deed of theirs is registered, and which will be opened in the last day. For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, every one being called to settle his accounts, as the guardian of his own soul; and all must answer for all, as trustees of each other's happiness.

I have asked the question, and I wish that every one of us would put it to himself, how and why it is, that, while in each of our doings and undertakings, we are carefully looking to the end, the probable consequences of our actions, we are yet so unmindful of that which, among all the possible results of our beginnings, is the only sure one, — death and the judgment to come. This unmindfulness, even among Christians, this unconcern about the future, however certain they acknowledge it to be, may, in a great measure, be traced to imperfect views of the life to come. The moral efficacy of the thought of eternity upon present conduct is impaired by ideas of the future state of heaven and of hell, which cannot be considered as the natural result, the appropriate reward or punishment, of our actions.

In the first place, many still think of heaven as a paradise of the senses, a pleasure-garden, filled with every thing that is pleasant to the sight, in which they may walk at liberty and enjoy; and of hell, as

a place of torment, a prison-house, from which they cannot escape. But, if the felicity of heaven consist in a constant enjoyment of ease, beautiful prospects, and enrapturing strains of music, and if the only occupation of the blessed be singing and praising God with their lips, though they be the lips of seraphs or the tongues of angels, — if such be the prospect of the good, — then heaven has but feeble attractions for him, who, in the strenuous performance of the duties of an active life or of intense thought, and, above all, in the blessed ministry of Christian benevolence, has already become acquainted with joys and rewards, before which all the pleasures that sights and sounds can give are passing away, as the gross conceptions of a lower world, to which he has become a stranger. He knows, from his own experience, from the answers of peace and joy which have sometimes rewarded his labors and blessed his prayers, he knows, that the frankincense of noble deeds is the most acceptable burnt-offering, that a virtuous life is the most glorious anthem, that the best notes of praise are written in the word of God, and that he who has learned to execute them well, has already joined the blessed choir of the psalmists in heaven.

On the other hand, if future punishments consist in bodily pains, however excruciating and enduring, the thought of hell is not sufficient to terrify the sinner, who has already experienced in this life, in his inmost heart, torments and terrors, in comparison with

which all the sufferings from heat or cold, hunger and thirst, would be grateful alleviations.

I say, then, that the moral efficacy of the thought of immortality and retribution is impaired by a view of the future state, which cannot be considered as the natural result, the appropriate reward or punishment, of the past. But these sensual views of future happiness and misery, these Mahometan attributes of hell and heaven, are fast fading away from the horizon of Christian hope and fear. They are passing away, because it is natural to men, in every stage of civilization and intellectual improvement, to conceive of the future state as a continuation and completion of the present, to think of heaven and of hell as an advanced state of good and evil, as a progress in happiness or wretchedness.

Those sensual representations of heaven and of hell, therefore, are natural and morally effectual, as long as men consider external and adventitious pleasure or pain as the sum and substance of human satisfaction or misery. In the course of time, by the influence of civilization and Christianity, the views of the present life, of its enjoyments and its sufferings, have grown more enlightened and refined; and, consequently, the views of the life that is to follow have become more elevated. The future state is considered as a state of spiritual happiness or of spiritual suffering.

But there is another more important, as well as more lasting, cause of the inefficacy of the doctrine of a future life as revealed in the Gospel. Men are indifferent to the prospect of futurity, not so much

from the inadequacy of their views of their future being, as from an unwillingness to make our present life a fit preparation for heaven. Those erroneous views appear to me to account for the practical unbelief of men no better than for the scruples of the Jews, who rejected the authority of Jesus on account of his coming out of Nazareth, while the true cause of their unbelief was the dread of the preparation which he required as the only terms of admission into his kingdom. Men forget, that they cannot enjoy any thing in the future, for which they have not acquired the capacity of enjoyment in the present. They forget, in particular, that they cannot truly and fully enjoy what they have not, in some degree, deserved. What is it that gives to our daily bread its best relish? Is it not the consciousness, that we have, through useful labor, if not earned, at least deserved it? What is it that makes rest from labor an enjoyment to us? Is not labor itself the true cause and indispensable condition of our enjoyment of rest? without which rest itself becomes the heaviest of toils.

In the same manner, the fruits of knowledge, the treasures of information, can be obtained only by faithful application, or at least they can be fully enjoyed only when they are fruits of our own raising, results of hard study, the fair earnings of our intellectual industry.

Again, how can we enjoy the society of good men without having done something to deserve their esteem and friendship? Is it not true with regard to our social pleasures, that we enjoy our friends in the

same degree in which we have endeavoured to make ourselves worthy of their love; that our hearts reap bountifully or sparingly as they have sowed bountifully or sparingly? And is it wise, is it safe, to ground our hopes of happiness in a future life upon any other foundation, than the actual condition and constitution of our being? To expect a harvest when we have done nothing to prepare and cultivate the ground; to expect that we shall be rewarded without any desert of our own, supposes a radical change of our whole nature, our own identity, — a change so great, that we should no longer recognise ourselves as the same beings, which, in fact, amounts to a denial of the immortality of the soul.

Then, if, tossed by the cares and troubles of this life, you look forward to a season of rest beyond it, remember, that your object cannot be attained by any other means than those, by which every moment of rest must be earned in this world; that a life of blessed rest can be the result only of a life of useful and beneficent action. If you expect in the future state an influx of knowledge, a dissipation of all your doubts, begin now to be a faithful student of truth, sound the depths and the shallows of this life, that the mysteries of that which is to come may not lie for ever hidden from your profaned understanding; try to understand, and truly to appreciate, the things of this world, that you may be found worthy to be initiated in the deep things of God.

Do you desire to see again, and enjoy the society of, your nearest and dearest friends, those who be-

held the morning of your existence, and hailed it with grateful joy and fervent prayers, those, who, with devoted love and constant care, have watched over you as the guardian angels of your infancy, those who have walked on with you, hand in hand, in the great and perilous journey of life, those whose tearful eyes will bid you the last sad farewell, — do you desire, do you earnestly seek and hope for, a reunion with these your earliest and your latest friends? Begin now to look upon these ties of affection as a sacred covenant for time and for eternity. Try to place them now on a safe, an eternal ground; try to purify, deepen, and refine your feelings; study the inward countenance of your friend, that, when his face is changed to your mortal eyes, you may recognise him by the indelible features of his immortal mind.

If you hope for the society of the spirits of the just, the merciful, begin now to do justice and to love mercy. If you aspire to the society of Jesus, remember his words; "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another." If you seek the presence of God, remember who they are, that shall stand in his tabernacle, and ascend his holy hill, and see him face to face.

Nay, if it be possible for the God of all mercies to say to the wicked, the spendthrift of his own heavenly patrimony, "Enter thou into the joy of the Lord," yet it would be impossible for the God of truth to say to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant;" and the enjoyment of the highest favor

would be marred by the thought of the punishment he had deserved. But we entertain no such view of the distribution of good and evil in the future world; we say, with the Prophet, the law of justice is our strength; the gates of heaven are open to every faithful servant of God, but not to those who have been parsimonious of their earthly possessions, and prodigal of their immortal hopes. If you have not sown love here on earth, how can you expect to reap love in heaven?

I hold it, then, to be a certain and most momentous truth, that we have no right or reason to expect, in the life to come, any other joy or pain than what we have prepared for ourselves by our present conduct. He, who expects to reap in heaven any rewards but those which are the genuine fruits of his own moral industry, indulges an idle fancy; for, as the Prophet says, he "sows the wind, and shall reap the whirlwind." I speak of those whose life has been continued long enough to enable them to form their own character. As for those who are taken away before that time, we know who has given them, and who has taken them to himself. He, who caused the child to see the light of this life in a mother's arms, he, who has implanted in mortal man a parent's joy and a parent's devoted care, can he himself be destitute of parental love? We feel assured, then, that the child, that is taken from our arms, will be welcomed, on his second birth, by a parent's joy, and watched over with parental care; it will awake to a new life in the bosom of its Father in heaven.

But as for those who have had opportunity to form their character in this life, we say, that it is the clear doctrine of revelation, that he, who sows to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; and he, who sows to the spirit, shall reap of the spirit a harvest of life and glory; and, whether we sow sparingly or bountifully, we are assured, that, with what measure we mete, it shall be measured to us again.

How can you expect to enjoy an eternal season of rest by any other means than those, by which you know the enjoyment of every moment of rest must be earned in this present life, — faithful and persevering labor? How can you expect to enjoy the society of those excellent minds, of all ages, who have been great by their goodness? How can you gain admission to the society of Jesus, and be recognised by him as a friend?

Learn it from his own lips; "'For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me.' Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, 'Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? Or when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?' And the King shall answer, and say unto them, 'Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.'"

Do you think yourself a fit companion of any excellent mind, if you have loved only the distinction, the outward glory, which his excellence has obtained for him?

Do you think yourself fitted for the immediate presence of God, if you have disfigured his image within yourself, and dishonored it in others, your fellow-men?

If either ignorance, or poverty, or sin, have hidden from your sight a fellow-spirit destined for the same immortal state, how can you expect, that the eye of your mind will pierce through the thick veil of your own ignorance and sins, to behold the invisible glory of a God of infinite purity.

Do you hope to meet again those whom you have loved best in this life, for whom you would gladly have sacrificed all you possess, for whom you would have laid down your lives to redeem them from the grave? Do you hope to meet, to embrace your parents, your children, your best and dearest friends? Reflect on the true grounds of union and separation of hearts and minds in the present life.

Removed to a higher stage of existence, a greater course of improvement is opened to them. Hasten to overtake them, and walk on with them from strength to strength, from glory to glory.

SERMON XI.

MATTHEW v. 48.

"Be ye perfect, even as your Father, which is in heaven, is perfect."

IN these words the Teacher of mankind declares the design of God in the creation of man. Men are destined by their Creator to be perfect, even as he, their Father in heaven, is perfect. Although no creature can equal God in his absolute perfection, his power, wisdom, and love; yet every thing, whether mineral, plant, or animal, may be perfect in its kind. So man, also, may be perfect according to his nature, if he wills to be so, if he faithfully uses all his faculties constantly to improve in power and wisdom, virtue and happiness. It is this perpetual growth in excellence, this infinite advancement toward perfection, in which human perfection consists, and by which we all may become like him, in whose image we are created.

This doctrine of man's eternal destiny and duty, which lies at the foundation of gospel morality, reveals, at once, the fitness and harmony of that mysterious assemblage of incalculable powers and unaccountable desires, which we call human nature. The

animal is guided and enabled by its instincts and by the appropriateness of its own faculties, as well as by the circumstances under which it is placed, to support itself and to supply its wants. But man, without that blind but certain guidance in his own nature, born into this world in utter helplessness, with faculties and desires which assign to him an endless existence, while they do not enable him to support his present state without the precarious assistance of his fellow-men; — man is at the same time the most destitute and the most gifted of all created beings. For that very helplessness, which seems to rank him below the other animals, is calculated to awaken the dormant freedom and exhaustless energy of his nature. This inability to find, in the present state, sufficient means to supply his infinite wants, reminds him, that he is not made to depend on outward means of subsistence, and to find a competency for himself on earth; but that he is destined to live upon the eternity of his own nature, and the unfailing assistance of Him, who has given him, in his very being, a pledge of its imperishable destiny. Without this revelation of ourselves, would not our own nature appear to us as a strange compound of beginning and preparations without end and object; as a record, drawn up in mysterious signs, without a key to decipher its meaning? It would be to us what an instrument is in the hand of him, who, without musical talents or skill, can draw from it nothing but a chaos of discordant sounds; while it is a source of endless harmony to the gifted mind.

The doctrine of the gospel, that man is destined for Godlike perfection, was not a new doctrine peculiar to Christianity. The ancient sages and lawgivers in Asia, and the greatest philosophers of Greece, had recognised the same sublime object as the destiny of man. They, indeed, could hardly help arriving at this truth, when they contemplated the state of perfection that is so evident in the various kinds of beings. When they compared the dead stone with the growing plant, the moving and living animal, and the free and comprehensive mind of man, how could they help perceiving, that all these various beings showed forth, in different degrees, the perfection of the Author of all, who has impressed his image most fully upon all.

But, though the contemplation of nature led the most eminent sages of old to descry from afar the sublime destiny of man, it was not given to them to complete their discovery. For, though it is easy to perceive the superiority of human nature to that of other beings in general, it still remains difficult to determine which of its various powers it is that constitutes the element of human perfection. It is natural for men whose moral ideas are not sufficiently developed, to recognise the divine energy of human nature chiefly in the striking and successful exhibitions of power and talent, by which some gifted individuals rise above the rest, and make themselves the disposers of the affairs and opinions of men. It is the idolatry of power and genius, which, in ancient times as well as in ours, has induced men to become un-

true to their own consciences. The same persons, who would condemn a man as a thief and a murderer for having violated the property or life of another, will hail him as a great man and a hero, if, by clear-sighted ambition and violence, he succeeds in rendering himself the master of the lives and possessions of millions of his fellow-beings. It has been truly said, that the shame diminishes as the crime increases. Thus the display of great and brilliant genius in the writings of some of the most vicious men, is apt to dazzle and betray the moral judgment of men in regard to their personal worth. I say, it is natural for the world, in the Christian sense of the term, to perceive and appreciate in man what is most conspicuous in his actions, rather than the silent, unobtrusive growth of his *moral* nature, whose workings and aspirations are either hidden from the world, or, if they are known, appear more frequently in failures than in the success of great and holy undertakings. It was therefore natural, that men, in general, should see human perfection in its most striking effects; whereas it was reserved for the Searcher of hearts, who knew all that was in man, to look through the dazzling appearance to the centre and source of human nature; and to declare, that it is through moral efforts, through virtue alone, that the mighty, as well as the poor in spirit, can become perfect, even as their Father in heaven is perfect.

Christian morality, however, has not always been viewed and represented in its true light. Its opposition to the intentional and selfish display of powers

for which no credit is due to him who is endowed with them, has been mistaken for a discouragement or discountenance of a free and full developement of all the faculties of man. Commonplace and worldly maxims, and narrow systems have frequently taken the place of the redeemed spirit of morality, that shines forth in Christ's doctrine of moral perfection, professedly calculated for the emancipation of human nature; "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Nay, the Gospel, the eternal charter of freedom, was used to induce men to consider the prostration of conscience, will, and reason, as the most acceptable offering on the altar of Christian duty.

It is true, Christianity sets certain bounds to human action, as it enjoins laws upon man, and demands not only a strict, but a cheerful obedience. But these limits have no other purpose, than to guard man from wasting his own power, and from injuring others; as you would dam up a navigable stream, to prevent its becoming shallow or desolating the land. Christianity requires us to give up some means of enjoyment and opportunities of gain, in order to be just and kind to others. But can this be considered as a restriction of true liberty and real power? The conqueror, who enslaves men and nations to enlarge his own power, is counteracting his own purpose. He has the power of giving or leaving to millions of human beings freedom and happiness, and he confines it to one person, to himself, and, even in this narrow undertaking, he necessarily fails. Instead of controlling

the destiny of others, he suffers his own spirit to be in bondage to his selfish and animal desires; while all his power over others does not enable him to retard their destination for freedom and happiness, except for a space of time too short to be counted in the immensity of their existence; after which they will rise in judgment against him. If the ideas of freedom and power were only rightly understood, the teacher of Christianity would find no cause to caution against too much liberty and an excessive love of power. On the contrary, he would have to say, that man cannot aim at too much power; for the more he has, so much the stronger is his inducement to seek, for its exercise, a sphere beyond his own narrow self. And, as he grows, himself, in true power, the truth of the gospel of Christ grows upon him, seeing that it is not a doctrine of bondage and fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

Human perfection consists in the free and harmonious unfolding and exercise of all our faculties. This is the supreme command of duty; and virtue, the performance of duty, is nothing else than the most earnest striving after perfection. The faculties of the body, of the mind, the intellect, the affections, and the active powers of man, require constant and strenuous exercise, without which there is no health nor growth either for the soul or the body. The body is to be made a ready and trusty servant of the mind. The intellect should be formed and exerted, not only to provide for our daily wants, but should be extended to every object within its reach, through

all the realms of creation, even to its infinite Author. "For the spirit teacheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." This duty of exercising the intellect, which is the only foundation of all belief and knowledge of earthly and of heavenly things, is still very generally neglected. It is indeed a sign of a true Christian spirit, that men, who are great in science or art, are nevertheless condemned by public opinion, if their conduct disgraces their intellectual eminence. But, on the other hand, we ought also to keep in view, that, as far as we know, each person has his peculiar virtues as well as faults; and, while we justly consider the intellectual eminence of those men as no excuse for their neglect of the common and principal duties of life, we ought not to justify ourselves. This we do, when we consider the latter duties as the only duties of man, and, in censuring others for their neglect of them, overlook our own deficiency in those parts of our conduct in which their peculiar virtue consists, namely, the cultivation of the *intellectual* powers.

Another essential attribute of human perfection consists in the cultivation of the feelings and affections. Man was not made to perceive and learn only all that is real, good, and beautiful, around and within him, but to take a part and interest in every trace of divine perfection. Knowledge was granted to man as the appointed messenger to prepare the way for love,—the love of nature, of man, and of God. Love is the vital interest of the mind in perfection. It is love, that reveals to man in the universe the image in

which he himself was created. For the whole universe is an expression of creative love. In the soul of man it is the regenerating power, that reclaims the lost child from the engrossing enjoyments of the world, which satiate the senses and starve the soul; and leads him back, purified, through the bitter waters of repentance, to the opening arms of his Father.

Love is the main spring of thought and action. Our affections are imperfect, if they are not strong enough to become actions whenever a good work is to be done, or evil to be resisted and overcome by good. "If ye love me," says the Saviour, "keep my commandments." But let it be considered, that we are not always called upon to carry our sentiments into effect, but that we never cease to think and feel. Thoughts and feelings are actions in the sight of Him who regardeth the heart. It is the heart, where the work of perfection is constantly to be carried on, where we are continually tempted to fall short of the standard of excellence by which we shall be judged.

But, if out of the heart are the issues of life and of action, the work of perfection, prepared in the mind and heart, is to be acted out and completed in word and in deed. There is no situation, or time of our life, in which we cannot do something to prove ourselves the fellow-laborers of God in his great work, the work of perfection. And, though it be not always in our power actually to increase the happiness of our fellow-beings, if we but restrain our own passions from injuring others, we do something for

their good, and, consequently, for our own. For so intimately is our destiny connected with that of our fellow-beings, that our good is advanced by promoting, nay, even by not impairing that of others. If you can but keep your foot from destroying a harmless insect, or a wild flower, or a shell on the sea-shore, that is in your way, you may promote your own perfection and happiness, by preserving for yourself an object of information, wonder, and love. Every destruction of life, or of the traces of perfection in any creature, if it is not necessary for the support and well-being of creatures of a higher order, particularly for the real good and information of man, is a sin against nature and the God of nature.

But, generally, our sphere of usefulness is not confined to the performance of those merely negative duties. Man has the power, and consequently it is his duty, actually to promote the happiness of others. Look around you, and see whether, among all whom you know, you can find one person, who is without deficiencies and wants, which require or admit the helping hand of another; or any one, who is not, in some way, capable of assisting others. Look wherever you may, among the richest and the poorest, all will have their peculiar wants, which make them dependent on others. But this apparent imperfection, that leads us to mutual dependence, is calculated to become the means of higher perfection, as it leads to mutual assistance. It is one of the great studies of life to acquaint ourselves with the wants of others, and with our own powers and opportunities to assist them.

Some of these wants are general and manifest, others are hidden and individual; all of them are sources of social duties to those who have the power to provide for them. The foundation of all social virtue and happiness is laid in domestic life, in the strong and tender relations of husband and wife, parents and children, brothers and sisters. Domestic life contains all the most important conditions in which we can contribute to each other's perfection. Those who have blended all their temporal and eternal interests, are taught by every day's experience, by their trials and cares, their joys and their troubles, that there is no true and lasting source of happiness, but disinterested love, an earnest endeavour to minister to each other's wants, to help one another onward in the way of perfection.

If we consider the wants and interests of society at large, perhaps the most important of all, at least for our earthly existence, is the establishment of *justice*, the protection of the rights of each individual, by equal laws, independent judges, and responsible magistrates. The duty of respecting and supporting the rights of all, is one of the highest moral obligations; and justice, which consists in the performance of this duty, is perhaps the most difficult of virtues. For the duty of giving and allowing every one his due leaves us no prospect of rendering others dependent on ourselves, or obliged through gratitude. Accordingly, we find more persons disposed to be charitable than just. But this is not said in disparagement of that mildest and kindliest of moral obligations, charity,

which is "the bond of perfection." It is left to the holy ministry of charity to satisfy or soothe those wants and sufferings, which must remain among men, even after the most equal distribution of justice, and the still more numerous evils which grow out of an imperfect state of the laws of society. Charity dwells not among the happy; as if too happy in herself, she seeks those to whom she may impart what she cannot bear to enjoy alone. The congregation of the friendless and afflicted, the largest on earth, repairs to the altars of charity; pilgrims from all parts of the world are continually thronging to her temple. Those, whom the inclemency of the seasons has left naked and starving, helpless childhood and trembling old age, the sick, the oppressed, the broken-hearted, kneel down at the mercy-seat, over which the angel, Charity, stands with healing in her wings. It is the prophetic eye of charity, that discerns through the restraints of society, and under the smiles of happiness, the dark spot in the depths of the heart, perhaps the monument of some faded bliss or lingering remorse. There is no spot so deep or so dark, that the light of charity may not reach it, and bring out its original brightness.

Besides justice and charity there are other duties, which must be considered as pillars of the temple of social happiness; such as the practice or encouragement of the arts and sciences, and particularly the great work of education. These subjects I can now only glance at, without attempting to do them justice. With regard to education, I will only remind you of

its two elements; I mean, first, domestic education, which is left to those whom nature herself has appointed to cherish and unfold in the infant mind the germs of the moral character and the religion of the heart; and then public education, the guardian spirit of liberty, order, and improvement among men. It is the sacred duty, as it is the highest privilege, of each generation to bequeath their state of improvement to their posterity, and, for this purpose, to appoint those whom they think most fully possessed of the intellectual attainments of the age, as trustees, to convey them faithfully to their descendants; that, through them, the great inheritance may be delivered, enlarged and improved, to each successive generation, when they themselves, from whom it came, shall have entered on higher stages of improvement. I have not named yet, though I have throughout this discourse *treated* of, the deepest principle in human nature, to which the work of perfection owes its rise and its infinity, — the principle of religion, the devotion of the soul to its Author, in thought and affection, purpose and action. Religion is the soul of duty, the true divinity of genius, inspiring and sanctifying its highest efforts. Domestic virtue, justice, charity, the love of truth and of beauty, the continual improvement of the successive generations of man, are so many manifestations of religion. They are its manifestations on earth, while the spirit of religion is continually pointing upward, and speaking to man, in every age and part of the world, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father, which is in

heaven, is perfect." The injunction of Scripture, "Be ye perfect," is confirmed and reiterated by the Gospel in our hearts, our own conscience. Our conscience, that tells us all we shall do, requires of us nothing but what we can do. It requires of us all the exertion of which we are capable.

Therefore, my Christian friends, let us press on toward the high mark of perfection, that is set before us in the words and the example of Jesus; let us, though with fear and trembling, yet with joyful trust in God, exert all the powers he has given us, to work out our own salvation.

SERMON XII.

1 Timothy vi. 7.

"We brought nothing into this world; and it is certain we can carry nothing out."

These words are words of soberness. They do not need a peculiar delicacy of perception to be understood, nor very great logical powers to be established. It would be difficult, if it were desirable, to render them palatable to a fastidious, imaginative cast of mind. They address those powers of the mind, which form the substantial patrimony of mankind,—our common sense and our conscience; and they appeal to the universal, undeviating experience of our race. We bring nothing into this world, and we carry nothing out. This is a plain statement of facts; a bare, naked sketch of the natural history of man. It forms, indeed, a striking contrast with the opinion of the world, which is so apt to value a man for what he has, rather than for what he is. When we look upon our text, upon this simple statement of man's original and final nakedness, we feel, notwithstanding all the pride and consequence of wealth, and the strength of the title by which it is held, that there is nothing in this world, that man may call truly, originally, and

permanently his own, his property; that, in fact, he comes into this world a beggar, and inhabits it as a tenant at will, and leaves it as an insolvent debtor.

The perishable, transient nature of our possessions and enjoyments, which is brought home to us by our text, should certainly not induce us to underrate their real importance. The desire to better his *present* condition, and to hold fast whatever is satisfactory in his lot, is a constituent element of the nature of man; it is, in truth, the beginning, the first manifestation of that aspiring after endless perfection, which is his high, natural prerogative among created beings. It is only when this desire to preserve or better his earthly condition tempts him to forget the higher purpose for which this desire itself was implanted in him, it is only then, that the solemn teachings of religion concerning the comparative worthlessness of all things that are seen and temporal, should be pressed upon his wandering heart. There is an intimate connexion between religion and civilization, between the arts and sciences which minister to our present comfort, and that deepest of all sciences, which reveals our eternal destiny, and that divine art, by which we can make the most adverse circumstances and vicissitudes subject and subservient to the great end of our being.

It is not every one who cares and labors for the things of this world, which, though we cannot carry them out of it, are yet necessary or convenient while we are in it, and therefore deserve a degree of attention and effort, adjusted to their real, though transient utility; — it is *he* only, who devotes himself to those

shortlived interests and pleasures with an anxiety of mind, an eagerness of pursuit, and tenacity of grasp, as if the one thing he covets were his all and his portion for ever, — it is the deluded worshipper of wealth, of popularity, of distinction, of power, who finds in our text a suitable, severe, and salutary rebuke. It applies to the farmer, whose thoughts are as wholly engrossed in enriching his land, as if he were sowing the bread of life, not only for the mortal, but the immortal part of his nature, while he allows the deep soil, which God has prepared in his own heart, to be overrun with weeds. It applies to the merchant, who neglects the cultivation of his mind and the duty of providing for the moral and intellectual, as well as the physical and economical interests of his family, in order to give himself up wholly to boundless speculations; as if the accumulation of wealth, for which he lives, and risks his health and life, were necessary, not only for the present term of existence, but for the life to come.

The savage chieftain, who orders his riches to be interred with him, and his horses and slaves to be killed upon his grave, that they may serve him in the life to come, — he has a sufficient reason for accumulating property beyond what is necessary to satisfy all his wants. But the man, who has grown up under the light of Christianity, and whose conduct is nevertheless actuated and swayed by an insatiable hunger after riches, which cannot benefit himself, and will surely injure his children, — he has not even a rude faith, like that of the savage chieftain, to account

for his wild chase after transient and faithless treasures. The same is to be said of the demagogue, who sets his heart upon, and spends his life for, the attainment of public favor, as if the long cherished accents of popular applause would reach his delighted ear, even in the regions of eternal silence.

It is true; naked, poor, powerless, man enters this world; and powerless, poor, and naked, he leaves it. But this truth, so mortifying to the pride of man, does it indeed extend to *all* he has and is? Well would it be, or at least it would appear well to the sinner, if, in the same grave that is to receive his deceased body, he could bury also his morbid spirit, his crippled mind, his wounded conscience. Well would it be for him who has taken by fraud or force that which was not his own, who has withheld the fair earnings, and invaded the sacred rights, of his fellow-men, if, when the lips that spoke the lie, and the hand that did the deed, perish, the liar, the robber, the murderer could blot out from his spirit the fatal record; if he could enter the life to come, as he entered that which now is, naked, with nothing to remember, not knowing either good or evil. But it is not so; the book of revelation says, it is not so; the immortal, uncorruptible witness within him repeats the declaration, that it is not so. Even while he is in the full enjoyment of the fruits of his crime, now and then there is a still, small voice, a voice as of one coming from the dead to bear witness of things that are to be, speaking louder and louder, until all the living voices, that invite to mirth and laughter, are

hushed in awe and trembling anticipation. It is true, then, that there are things, which, although we did not bring them into this world, it is certain we shall carry out of it, and bear with us to the judgment-seat of God.

And this solemn truth, which makes the sinner tremble, is the comfort, perhaps the only comfort, of the righteous in this world. Of all our possessions and attainments there are none that we can truly call our own, our individual, exclusive property, except our virtues and our sins. In the midst of trouble and persecution the anticipation of a life to come appears to the righteous man as an angel from heaven, strengthening him. In his own experience he finds the truth, and in his heart he feels the power, of those inspired and inspiring words, "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." That power, by which he, who possesses no other, is able to overcome the world, is not a capacity which he brought into this life, nor a favor conferred on him by circumstances, or by a special providential interposition; but a strength acquired by the faithful exercise of all his faculties, by self-control and self-sacrifice, by study and toil, by watching and praying. While he, who neglects the capacities with which nature has sent him into this world, leaves it in moral nakedness, or self-accusing deformity, the soul, that has been true to her nature and her mission, goes out clothed in her own strength, in the majesty of conscious worth, in the beauty of holiness.

Our text, then, which asserts the original and final

nakedness of man, is a true description of the natural, but does not apply to the moral, history of man; and the great moral object of the text is to lead us, from a consideration of the perishable nature of all outward possessions, the partial and uncertain gifts of fortune, to a contemplation of the only true riches. While it does not induce us to underrate the real, though transient utility of the comforts and luxuries of life, it would not have us overlook or forget the difference between that which can last but for a time, and that which, by our own exertion, may be made to endure for ever. When we gaze with admiration, perhaps with envy, on the purple and fine linen which clothe the rich man, on the house of marble which shelters him, on the train of servants that wait his bidding, and the circle of admirers that study his pleasure, it is well for us to be reminded, that, for all these things, the rich man has no more security than the poor man has for his rags and his hovel.

But the rich fountains of truth, and love, and virtue, are within us, and spring forth unbidden, as soon as the weight of selfishness that conceals them is removed. These sources of inward felicity are perennial, flowing on undiminished through all the seasons of our earthly existence, and springing up into everlasting life. I would not forego the enjoyment of the flowers because it decays as they decay. But then it is true of every plant of earthly joy, that the longer it has lived, so much the sooner it must fade and die; and the older it grows, the more imperfect are its blossoms and its fruits, and the less

will it bear transplanting into another soil. But with those plants which spring and grow in the garden of life within us, it is not so. The more they grow, the deeper and wider they spread their roots and their branches, so much the brighter their blossoms and sweeter their fruits; so much the better are they fitted to be transplanted to a soil where they may grow and blossom, and bear fruits for ever. Consult your own experience, watch the growth of your knowledge, your affections, your character, and promise of everlasting life. The more we enrich our minds with knowledge, so much the more intense and insatiable grows our desire to enlarge our acquaintance with the boundless manifestations of infinite Wisdom; and we feel convinced, if there be any evidence of providential design in the nature of things, that He, who implanted in us this ever-growing desire after truth, must have made provision for it beyond the scanty sustenance it may draw from the earth. And thus, the more faithfully and tenderly we cultivate our affections, so much the stronger and wider do they grow, going forth continually in search of new objects of love, while holding faster and faster that which our hearts have already found; and thus with the increase of our affections our faith increases, so that these friendships, for which we are able to lay down our lives, and this spirit of love within us, that would hold God and the world in its embrace, are too strong for the bonds of death to contain them. And when you watch the growth of the character of men, you find that the increase of information and right reasoning on

other subjects, and in the exercise of other occupations, whatever they be, is doing more for the promotion and expansion of rational religion, than all the direct efforts of its professors. I hold, then, that a rational enjoyment of our present existence, and a proper estimate of all the comforts and refinements of civilized life, is by no means inconsistent with that religious consideration of the transient nature of all earthly possessions, which is placed before us by our text. But the grave thought, that, as we brought nothing into this world, we shall carry nothing out, this solemn memento, is well fitted to check and expose that eager and reckless pursuit of pleasure, or of gain, which seems to consider the whole business of life to consist in answering the questions, what shall we eat and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed. It bids us stand still and consider, whether this life has not a meaning besides and beyond the acquisition and accumulation of treasures, of which nothing is certain but this, that we shall carry out nothing. It leads us to reflect upon this restless desire within us for pursuits and enterprises far greater than any that were ever contemplated by the boldest and most far-sighted speculator in earthly riches. It must awake, in the most narrow-minded worldling, a suspicion, that his reason was given him not merely to serve him as a delicate vane to indicate the slightest changes in the opinion of the world, that may affect his standing in society; that his affections crave something better than the mere shadow of love and friendship; and that his

moral powers, the capacity of forming his own character, were certainly not intrusted to him for producing the most perfect counterfeit of virtue.

It is evident, from all these considerations, that the true object of our text is to lead us to the truth proclaimed by our Saviour;

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal."

If rightly understood, the consideration of the perishable nature of all earthly possessions will not diminish, but increase the enjoyment of these transient favors of Providence, because it frees the mind, that has learned to depend upon higher goods, from that painful anxiety, which blends with the possession of things which we believe indispensable to our peace and happiness. It should make us more willing either to part with them, for the benefit of our fellow-men, or to leave them behind as the garments of our childhood, when the time comes for us to be clothed upon with strength, and for this mortal to put on immortality.

SERMON XIII.

MATTHEW IV. 1.

"Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted."

THE subject, on which I wish to address you, my Christian friends, is the temptation of Jesus Christ in the wilderness. I do not intend, however, to make this event in the life of our Saviour, the subject of controversy, which loves to gather its thunder-clouds around this high point of theology. Persuaded as I am of the usefulness of controversy, for clearing the spiritual atmosphere from the unwholesome influence of presumption and prejudice, I do not believe, that the seeds of truth and love in the heart can be made to grow by the bright flashes of controversial theology, but by the clear and gentle rays of moral instruction and spiritual influences. With regard to the temptation of Christ, it is certainly true, that the discussions of theologians, about the form or personality of the tempter and the metaphysical nature of the tempted Saviour, have impaired the moral efficacy, because they have obscured the moral meaning, of the story.

It is related in the Gospel of Matthew, that Jesus,

after his baptism and miraculous recognition as the Son of God, "was led by the Spirit into the wilderness," where he remained forty days, wholly absorbed in preparing himself for the duties and trials of his ministry. While he was thus surveying the course of his future life, which, to his prophetic mind, must have been a matter of actual experience, rather than of wavering anticipation, three temptations, that is, three desires, incompatible with the spiritual nature and the moral design of his divine mission, were excited in his mind.

In consequence of a long abstinence from all food but the scanty supplies of the wilderness, he was, as the Evangelist tells us, "an hungered." He was tempted to supply this want of his animal nature by the use of those powers which were given him only for the establishment of his divine ministry and spiritual kingdom. But a mightier thought immediately rose in his mind; the thought, that man was made to live, not by bread alone, but by every word of God. Though hunger should put an end to his temporal existence, the life of his mind was secured by that word which made man a living and immortal spirit, by the word of promise from on High, that those, who do not forsake him and his holy law, will never be forsaken by their faithful Creator. The thought, that the wants of his immortal nature were provided for by the bread of life that never fails to descend to the starving soul, — this thought enabled Jesus to subdue the temptation arising from his present necessity. His mind, freed from this care, could now pursue the

course of his ministry. This ministry called for the most arduous and persevering exercise of all his powers, in order to convince the world of his divine mission, and to save it from error and from sin. But was he not able to save himself all the labor, the trials, and the sufferings that awaited him, simply by a signal display of those powers, which, though not his own, were lent him by God for the fulfilment of his mission? He already saw himself standing on a pinnacle of the temple; how easy was it for him, whom angels were charged to bear up in their hands, how easy was it for him to cast himself down in the presence of all, and thus to convince the most unbelieving of the divinity of his mission, and establish his authority.

But this tempting prospect of answering, by one unquestionable exhibition of miraculous power, the whole object of his ministry, — this thought had no sooner risen in his mind, than it was overtaken by the conviction, that it was presumption to put such an unreasonable confidence in the divine favor as to expect, that God would help him to effect, by additional power and miraculous interposition, what he had left undone by the sinful neglect of those talents and powers with which God had already intrusted him. I say, the tempting suggestions of self-love and labor-saving presumption had no sooner presented themselves to the mind of Jesus, than they were repelled by the advocate of heaven in his heart, "Thou shalt not tempt," that is, presumptuously try, "the Lord thy God."

Thus, neither the pressing demands of nature, nor the perfidious counsel of vain presumption, availed against the protecting power of faith and virtue in the heart of Jesus.

Still the enemy, though twice defeated, was not disabled and disarmed. That temptation, which seems to comprise the most dazzling and the most fatal charms of evil, and which has always proved the most dangerous to minds superior to every other allurement, ambition, the love of dominion, held out its most splendid rewards to Jesus. "All the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them" lay within the reach of his hand. Nay, the prophets themselves, in foretelling his glory, had spoken of him as a mighty Conqueror and King. But the Messiah discerned what was hidden, perhaps, from the Prophets themselves, he discerned the spiritual meaning, the moral truth, embodied in those figurative descriptions of the Messiah, in which they were prompted to foretell his coming and his reign. He would not sin against the spirit, by availing himself of the dead letter, of these prophecies, and establishing a kingdom of this world. Jesus saw, that, by gratifying his ambition, by serving himself, he would have deserved the reproach of the Pharisees, he would have made himself God; and he resolutely cast out the evil spirit by the simplest and deepest conviction of his inspired mind. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." After this, we are told, the tempter left him, and angels came and ministered unto him.

This is the history of the temptation of Jesus Christ. And now, my friends, let us contemplate it in that practical point of view in which we should look at the whole life of our Saviour; I mean, with a sincere desire to imitate it, so far as we, who are endowed only with human powers, can imitate divine excellence.

In the first place, we look upon temptation, upon the liableness of man to be tried by the allurements of sin, not as a defect in man's nature, but as an essential means of that higher excellence for which he is created. We know, that, if we could not be tempted to sin, we should be incapable of virtue and moral excellence. We might possess the gentleness of the lamb, the boldness of the lion, and the fidelity of the dog; or we might possess the cunning of the fox and the ferocity of the tiger; but, if these qualities were given to us as unalterable instincts of our nature, we should have no more responsibility than the brute. There would be no room for virtue or vice, good or ill desert, moral rewards or punishments. We look, then, upon temptation with the view of the Apostle, who says, "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations." "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." For the same reason, nothing in the life and character of our Saviour seems to us of greater importance than the fact, that "he was," as the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews asserts, "in all points tempted like as we

are." For without this liableness to be tempted, to have his virtue tried, his goodness put to the test, his life would cease to be what renders it most valuable to all mankind, a moral example. Our Saviour, then, was tempted as we are, tempted to abuse those powers which were given him for the highest purpose, for the good of mankind, by making them the means of gratifying animal wants and selfish desires. We, too, I mean all men that are born into this world, bring with us a heavenly mission; we, too, have powers, not miraculous, but great and wonderful, intrusted to us for the highest purpose, the good of our fellow-men; we, too, are tempted to abuse these powers for the gratification of our animal and selfish appetites.

We are liable to the very same temptations, we are called to the same trials and moral efforts, which we find exhibited in the temptation of him, who, by conquering all attacks of the tempter, became the moral Saviour of the world. We are tempted particularly by those three prospects of selfish gratification which presented themselves to Jesus in the wilderness. We are tempted by want, by presumption, by ambition.

We are told, that, when Jesus went forth from the baptism of John, there was no enemy before, there was no strife within him; for "lo! the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon him; and lo! a voice from heaven, saying, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'" Thus,

"Heaven lies about us in our infancy."

The child gratefully receives, and eagerly drinks in, the spiritual instruction, the glad tidings delivered to him by the guardians of his soul, by those who, at the baptismal font, have pledged themselves for his religious education. The eye of the child is eager to see what lies beyond the most distant hills and the farthest skies; and, trembling with anticipation and solemn joy, the child listens to the wondrous tale, that the sun of life, when it sets upon this dark earth, is not lost in eternal shades, but, unseen to mortal eyes, continues its glorious course on high to other worlds, the abodes of life and happiness. The child is easily taught to hear, in every approbation of its conscience, a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved child, in whom I am well pleased. Surrounded by the happy influences of a Christian education, a child feels not only prompted by conscience, but drawn on by the pleasures of virtue, to obey the call of duty. But this childish goodness, proceeding in a great measure from unacquaintance with evil, belongs only to the morning hour of life, before the busy day has waked up with its toils, and its cares, and its temptations. Adverse or wayward circumstances soon cast us into the midst of the struggles and conflicts of life; or, if favorable circumstances should enable us to avoid them, there is a spirit in man, that would impel him to seek, of his own accord, the trials and perils of active life, in which childish innocence may ripen into manly virtue. Then those temptations, which visited the mind of Jesus in the wilderness, while meditating on the course of duty

before him, will meet us in every path of life, whether high or low. Want will oppress us, and tempt us to relieve our necessities by dishonest means, because they are the easiest. Presumption will present the charms of an indolent or fool-hardy confidence in success, which we have done nothing to deserve. Ambition, at last, will taint our best endeavours, and show us how to ennoble our basest passions, and crown our most criminal attempts.

I will add a few remarks on each of these three temptations.

Want, or the inability of supplying our most urgent desires, is the most common temptation, and the most abundant source of crime among men. With regard to this temptation, Christianity has two considerations to offer, one to the sufferers, the children of want and distress, and the other to those who have the power to relieve them.

To the poor man, to whom life presents nothing but a hard and stony road, without a home in which to rest him on his journey, without a spot of fertile land to receive the seeds of his industry, and who should feel tempted to convert the stones around him into bread or into gold, by theft or fraud, — to him we should say, Behold the Saviour hungering in the wilderness! Let his example be to you a warning, an encouragement. Do not despair of yourself, do not despair of your fellow-men, but, though all should desert you, still do not despond! There is food, there is bread, provided for you, which is indeed the staff of life; there is a garment (even a wedding gar-

ment) laid up for you, where no thief can enter; there is a place of refuge; there is a home; there are arms, from whose embrace, neither poverty, nor persecution, nor death can wrest you. Only keep your hands pure and your conscience clean, and you need not fear those powers of evil, which can kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul.

This is what Christianity has to say to those who are in want, and by want are tempted to evil.

But to those who have the means to relieve the sufferings by which others are tempted to vice, and who faithlessly withdraw their supporting hand, the spirit of the Gospel seems to say, "Woe unto the world because of offences! it must needs be, that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!" In the sight of a heart-searching God, he, by whom the offence cometh, he, who tempts others to sin, and he, who does nothing to remove the temptation and deliver them from the evil, are in the same condemnation.

The second temptation, upon which I wish to say a few words, is presumption.

We commit this sin, when we neglect to use our own strength to perform our own duty, with a rash and foolish expectation, that fortune or Providence will prosper our undertakings. It is presumption, if we expose our lives and the lives of others to the ravages of disease, when its progress might be stopped by watchful care and wise precaution. We are guilty of presumption, if we expose the moral health of our

children to the pernicious influence of bad example. We are guilty of presumption, if we trust in the stability of our laws, our freedom, our union, while we commit the reins of government to political swindlers and demagogues. We are guilty of presumption, if we suppose, that a life of self-indulgence, of injustice, and unkindness, may still be crowned by the free grace and superabundant mercy of God, with a life of eternal peace and happiness. We are guilty of presumption, if we trust the salvation of our souls to the profession of a certain creed, a faith without works and without merit, rather than to the conscientious performance of all our duties. A proud, exclusive zeal for a popular creed, or sect of religion, may assign to you a conspicuous place on the pinnacle of the temple, but it will not lead you into the sanctuary.

He, who, inflated by religious presumption, and despising the common laws of morality, ventures upon the fearful leap from time to eternity, may be sure, that no angel hands will be charged with bearing him up to the seat of glory.

I now come to the last and strongest of all temptations, the most dangerous to the best minds, because it seems to draw nourishment from virtue itself. Those, who, by deserving well of their fellow-men by their able and faithful services, have risen to high stations of honor, trust, and power, in society, are tempted by ambition to make themselves the masters of their brethren, though they may style themselves

servants of servants. Wherever there is an occasion offered to man for exercising any power over his fellow-men, however beneficial the purpose for which it is given, he is tempted to use it solely or chiefly for his own advantage. The statesman is tempted to make himself the arbiter of the commonwealth; the clegyman to tyrannize over the consciences of his people; the master over his apprentices or domestics; the rich man over the dependent poor.

O! my friends, when thus tried by ambition, let us look up to the tempted Saviour in the wilderness, to him who cast a world at the feet of the prince of this world, and exchanged all its kingdoms and their glory for the life of a servant and the ignominy of the cross.

Let us often, my friends, when straying in the wilderness of this life, look back upon our tempted Saviour. Let us stand fast in the belief, that no real evil can befall him who obeys the laws of the Almighty; that all trials and temptations are designed to prepare us for that perfection of happiness, which we cannot attain unless we render ourselves worthy of it by moral exertion.

Let the young, who look forward to a long and arduous ministry in this life; let the old, with the prospect of eternity in view; let us all, my friends, examine, with conscientious care, the temptations that beset us on our way; let us arm ourselves against every open attack, every perfidious counsel, of the enemy within, by a calm and uncompromising resolu-

tion to obey the will of God, revealed to each one of us by his own conscience; and surely the tempter will leave us, and the angels of God, truth, peace, and love, will come and minister unto us, leading us to a nearer resemblance to, and more intimate union with the Father of our spirits.

SERMON XIV.

JAMES II. 19.

"Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well; the devils also believe and tremble."

THE meaning of this passage is evident from the main purpose of this epistle of James, which is intended to show the insufficiency of a faith without works, that is, of the mere fact of a person's believing the doctrine of Christ, without his acting accordingly. We are told, in the New Testament, that the existence and unity of God and the divine mission of Jesus were believed, not only by good, but also by evil spirits, which expression seems to designate every being, whether man or angel, that is intent on wickedness. But, although these reprobate beings believe in the Father and in the Son, their faith is not conducive to salvation, that is, to the temporal and eternal happiness of their souls, because their actions are not conformed to their belief.

The moral justice of this doctrine is self-evident. But how is it to be reconciled with those numerous passages, in which faith is represented as the means of salvation; as in the first epistle of Peter, "Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of

your souls." In this and similar passages, faith is considered as a virtue conducive to salvation; although our text ascribes faith also to evil spirits, the subjects of condemnation. This apparent discrepance cannot be solved by reference to the Greek original of our English version, in regard to which it will be sufficient to observe, that the words, faith and belief, as they express the same Greek word, must be considered as synonymous terms in Scripture. There is no other way of ascertaining the harmony of those different passages, but to attend to that act of the mind itself, which we call faith or belief, and then to examine the particular cases to which those passages refer. Many controversies, which have agitated, and are still agitating, the Christian world, might be settled by attending more particularly to the nature and operations of the human mind. No study is so important and interesting, and none so much neglected, as that of the mind, although it is essentially within the reach of every person. For every one, that has a sound mind, is capable of observing its operations; and all real knowledge of the nature of the mind is founded on accurate observation. Let us see, then, if, in this way, by examining the nature of faith, and comparing it with other operations of the mind, we can solve that apparent dissonance in Scripture. We all know, that there is a difference between believing and imagining a thing. We can imagine or suppose, that the ground, on which we now stand, may be covered with water to-morrow; but we do not believe it, that is, we do not believe

this supposition true. Like the heathens, we may imagine a whole world of gods; and we may imagine that there is no God. But we believe neither the one nor the other. We believe, that is, our reason compels us to acknowledge, that there is one God, and none other besides him. Man may imagine whatever he pleases, but he can believe only that which he conceives to be real. Accordingly, the exercise of his imagination depends on his own will, while his faith or belief is not a matter of choice, but of necessity. We really believe what we cannot help believing; and, in order to satisfy ourselves whether any of our opinions are really a matter of faith or of mere imagination, we can put them to the test, by trying whether we have it in our power or not to admit or to reject them. Every person believes in the evidence of his own senses. A Christian, moreover, believes in the evidence of things unseen, which his reason compels him to acknowledge as equally, or rather as more certain, than any visible object; such as the existence of God, and the immortality of the human mind; because, if he would, he could not disbelieve them.

From this principle, that it is not in the power of man to believe or disbelieve a thing according to his own will, an important moral inference is to be drawn. Every person is accountable, and deserving either of praise or blame, for all those things which depend on his own will; but not for necessary actions or omissions. No person, therefore, is accountable for the objects of his belief. A heathen, brought up in idol-

atrous notions, and of too limited powers to divest himself of them, is no more to be blamed for his error, than one, who is born and educated a Christian, is to be praised for his true conceptions of God and man. The worst men may believe what is true, and the best men may take error for truth. "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well; the devils also believe and tremble." The spirits of darkness are as much compelled, by their own intellect, to acknowledge the existence of God, as the children of light; it is not a matter of choice with either, and therefore no ground of commendation or censure. This being so, our natural conception of the justice of God, as well as the doctrine of the New Testament, leads us to believe, that every person is to be judged, not according to a faith, which, however true, is not his own; but the Jew, by the law of Moses; the heathen, by the law of nature; the Christian, according to the Gospel; in short, every one according to his own belief or conviction.

These observations, founded on the nature of faith, may be sufficient to illustrate the doctrine of our text, that the fundamental article of all faith, the belief in God, may be embraced by evil, as well as by good minds, without increasing or diminishing either the truth of the principle, or the worth of the believer.

This is true, not only in regard to the belief in God, but to every doctrine of religion; and it explains all those passages of Scripture in which, as in our text, the word *faith* denotes the object of a man's belief, his religious opinions. In all these in-

stances, faith is considered not as a matter of the will of man, but of his intellect, which compels him to consider certain ideas as truths, and to reject others. But in those passages, in which faith is represented as a virtue conducive to salvation, and the want of it as sin, it is evident, that faith is considered as a matter of the *will*, which is the only proper ground of man's accountableness. The question, then, arises, What power has the will of man over his faith or belief? If we examine these two operations of the mind, we find, that the will bears the same relation to the faculty of believing, as it does to the senses. It is not in our power to see things differently from what they appear to our open eyes; but it is in our power to shut them and to improve, or spoil, our sight. In the same manner, we cannot arbitrarily dispose our intellect to perceive and believe certain religious ideas, for which we do not see sufficient reasons; but we certainly have it in our power to use or neglect, to improve or pervert our intellectual faculties. To improve and use them faithfully is virtue; and virtue is the only sufficient cause of salvation, that is, of true and eternal happiness. To neglect and abuse those faculties, which God has given us for the perception of truth, is vice, and vice is the only just ground of condemnation. Our own conscience, the tribunal of God in our hearts, does not condemn us for our opinions, however erroneous, if it were not in our power to acquire more satisfactory views. But it condemns us for every neglected opportunity of acquiring new light, or forsaking that which we have

already obtained. We say, that a man's conscience reproves him for his want of faith. In this instance, faith, if it is rightly understood, does not mean a man's religious opinions, but his faithful endeavours to find out and hold fast that which is true. This view of faith explains, as I believe, all those passages of Scripture, in which faith, or belief, is represented as a virtue by which we are saved, and unbelief as a sin sufficient to condemnation. I shall endeavour to show, that, in all these instances, faith, or belief, signifies the willingness of man to receive, cherish, and maintain religious truth. I shall first mention some of those passages, in which faith denotes willingness to receive religious truth; then others, in which it signifies earnestness in cherishing these principles; and, lastly, passages in which faith means constancy in maintaining them.

1. Faith denotes the willingness of man to receive religious truth in all those numerous passages, in which Christ rebukes the Jews for not receiving his doctrine. "Because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not." It would be wrong to suppose, that Jesus had required of those who heard him, any thing so utterly impracticable, as the belief of a doctrine repugnant to their reason; or that he had blamed them for not acknowledging him as the Messiah, because the proofs he gave of his mission did not satisfy their minds. On the contrary, he appealed to their own understandings, "Why, even of yourselves, judge ye not what is right?" For the elements of his doctrine were the same in which they were educated,

and which they professed to believe, even the principles of the Old Testament. His own mission, predicted by Moses and the Prophets, was evinced by his sinless life, and established by miracles, which were performed, not only by himself, but also by his disciples, in consequence of their belief in him. The Jews, therefore, had not only no reason for doubting his doctrine and divine mission, they had even stronger proofs of them than mere reason could have afforded. Any unprejudiced mind, though not endowed with the miraculous power of Christ to scan every motive of the heart, cannot fail to perceive, that the unwillingness of the Jews to believe in Jesus did not arise from the honest questioning of reason, but from resisting and rejecting the judgment of their own minds. Whenever, therefore, Jesus reproached them for their unbelief, it was on account of their not allowing themselves to be convinced by the testimony of their own minds, which could not have resisted the evidences contained in his words and in his works, if they had not intentionally shut their eyes against the light of truth, as it is in Jesus. This truth was so humiliating to them, that they continued to ask for signs, and were, on that account, reproved for their unbelief. For the miracles, which Jesus had worked in evidence of his doctrine, were sufficient to satisfy every mind, not opposed to truth, or to that moral reformation, which Christ's doctrine required of its believers.

But, even among the disciples of Christ, we find instances of that unbelief, which consists in unwillingness to receive the evidence of spiritual truths. This

want of faith was evident in the request of Philip, "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us," and likewise in these words of Thomas, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." It is difficult, not only for a depraved, but for an unenlightened mind, fully to comprehend, that the mind itself, that virtue, pure affection, and the communion of the soul with its Maker, are real objects, although they cannot be perceived by the senses. The truth of this remark appears in the whole history of Jesus, in all the difficulties he met with in endeavouring to convince men of the reality of his kingdom. For it was not a temporal reign, presenting worldly honors to its friends, and terrors to its enemies; but a spiritual kingdom, which promised heavenly rewards for earthly sufferings, and relied on no other arms than those of the mind. It was only by degrees, that even the chosen disciples of Christ ceased to feel and act like strangers in that new spiritual world to which their Master had introduced them. It was, then, the greatest moral exertion to clear their ideas of God and his Christ, and of their own immortal destiny and duty, from earthly conceptions and national prejudices, which prevented them from receiving the spiritual doctrines of Jesus. In this exertion consisted that faith, which Jesus required of them as indispensable to their being admitted to the kingdom of heaven. On this account he reproved Philip, when he, instead of opening his mind to the evidence of things not seen, demanded to behold, with his mortal

eyes, the Father of spirits. For the same reason he said to the disciple, who already repented his unwillingness to credit the resurrection of his Master upon any testimony but that of his own eyes, "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou has believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

2. I have examined some passages, in which faith signifies the willingness of the mind to rise above earthly views and to receive religious truths. I shall now speak of those passages, in which faith signifies earnestness in cherishing those principles which have been received as true. The mind of man may be open to receive the light; he may endeavour to divest himself of narrow conceptions, and to acquire more enlarged ideas, and yet his heart may not be in his views, however certain he may think them. He may free his mind from low ideas, and yet retain the lowest affections, and in that respect be essentially deficient in faith.

Faith, in this instance, consists in the moral effort to keep down and suppress those desires which prevent the holy flame of love in our hearts from rising to Him from whom it came, and inspiring all our words, actions, thoughts, and purposes. Of the numerous passages in which faith denotes this earnestness in embracing and cherishing what we hold to be true, I will mention only those which refer to prayer. The Apostle James admonishes every one, who asks any thing of God, to "ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the

wind and tossed. For let not that man think, that he shall receive any thing of the Lord." Every petition to the Supreme Being, however rational, carries with it the consciousness of its inefficiency, if the whole soul is not in it; if it is not a prayer in spirit and in truth. This is particularly evident in those passages of Scripture, which speak of faith as an act of the human mind to which miraculous powers were assigned in the earliest time of Christianity. Jesus had convinced his disciples, that it was the will of God to confirm, by miracles, the truth and divine authority of the Gospel. He had convinced them, that, as long as they should support the character of his messengers by an absolute trust in God, they should be enabled to perform any act conducive to the end of their calling, although far beyond their own human strength. It was the want of that earnestness in prayer, which arises from the conviction of its efficacy, for which Jesus reproached them, when the people brought to him a sick man, whom his disciples had not been able to heal; and he exclaimed, "O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you?"

3. I have shown, that faith, in Scripture, frequently signifies willingness to receive the truth, and earnestness in cherishing it. It now remains for me to mention some examples, in which faith signifies constancy in maintaining our convictions in word and action, and in thought. Faithless in word and action were those of the Jewish rulers who believed in Christ, but did not confess him for fear of

being put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men better than the praise of God. Faithful was Abraham when he went to offer up his only son. Faithful was he who, for the glory that was set before him, endured the cross. Faithful, in the same sense of the word, were all those, who, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, are enumerated as having been saved by faith.

But both faithfulness and faithlessness may be shown in thoughts as well as in words and actions. Every person is accountable for preserving and sustaining, in his own mind, his religious principles, until he is convinced of their falsity. On this ground a person deserves blame, who, by reason and revelation, has satisfied himself, that his soul is immortal, and afterwards gives up this belief, either on account of a plausible argument, without having devoted to it the same careful examination by which he had established his faith, or on account of an unforeseen danger, without having tried the immortal energy of his mind in striving to overcome the fear of his mortal nature. Thus, in many instances, in which Jesus rebuked his disciples for their unbelief, he reproached them, not on account of the inability of their faculties to comprehend his doctrine, nor for any objections of their understanding against the truth, but because they suffered momentary impressions upon their senses to prevail over the convictions of their minds.

When the disciples, in the storm which threatened to destroy the vessel in which they were with Jesus, who was asleep, awaked him with the words of de-

spondency and reproof, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" he arose, and quieted the raging elements, and said to his disciples, "Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?" By these words of reproof, "Why is it that ye have no faith," our Saviour could not have meant to reproach his disciples on account of any doubts arising from too free or bold an exercise of their reason, and reliance on their own faculties. But he reproached them for having allowed the fear for their earthly existence, excited by powerful impressions upon their senses, to overcome the solemn conviction of their immortal minds, that the presence of their Master, that his peaceful sleep, in the midst of the storm, was to them a seal of safety, which all the powers of the enraged elements did not dare to break. Moreover, the words with which Jesus, walking on the sea, addressed his intimidated disciples, "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid,"—these words of comfort were addressed to their faith: for, when Peter, presuming too much upon his faith, ventured to come out of the ship to go to Jesus, and, being frightened by the increased violence of the wind, began to sink, exclaiming, "Lord, save me," Jesus upheld him, saying, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

In these and similar instances, in which faith is represented as a virtue, and doubt as sin, it is evident, that faith does not mean the object of a man's belief, his creed, and that doubt does not mean the questioning of reason, which cannot adopt a doctrine without

being convinced of its truth. It is manifest, that faith, in these instances, is synonymous with moral courage, that it denotes the power of the will of man to keep up the conviction of his mind against impressions upon his senses and passions. Whether these temptations to forsake his conviction arise from terror, as in the forementioned passages of Scripture, or from worldly allurements, is a circumstance which does not alter the character of the temptation, or the duty to overcome it. He, who forsakes his religious opinions for the purpose of gaining or preserving worldly advantages, or of avoiding ridicule, or acquiring the abused name of a philosopher, is under the same condemnation of wanting faith.

I have endeavoured to show you, my friends, that faith, or belief, is considered in Scripture partly as a matter of intellect, and partly as a matter of will. In the first-mentioned sense, in which the word occurs in our text, it signifies those religious ideas which a person conceives to be true; or, as it is expressed in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." But in those passages which speak of it as a virtue, the word *faith* signifies the willingness of man to receive, cherish, and maintain religious truth. I have also shown, that, for those ideas which a person is led by his own reason to consider as true, for the creed which he conscientiously embraces, he is not accountable; but for his exertion in acquiring, cherishing, and maintaining correct religious principles, every one is accountable according to his ability.

It is the natural consequence of this view of faith, that it should make us anxious to find out and cherish what is true, but fearless as to the result of our honest researches; trusting that God will give us as much light as is best for us, to encourage our endeavours, and that the righteous Judge, who regardeth the heart, will reward or condemn us, not according to our attainments, but according to our exertions in the pursuit of truth. If we consult, without fear or prejudice, the word of God declared in the Gospel, and the voice of God in our own hearts, we shall find, that the living and saving faith, that is required of us, does not consist in our assent or adherence to a particular belief; but that our faithful exertion, in seeking after truth and obeying what we conscientiously hold to be true, is the only safe foundation of virtue, peace, and salvation.

On the other hand, a misconception of the true nature of faith has given rise to many dangerous errors, which have been, and still are, much more injurious to the cause of Christianity, than all the attacks of persecution and skepticism.

Many think, that those alone are justified in the sight of God, who adopt and profess certain religious tenets, while all those who reject them are, and finally will be, rejected by God as unbelievers. They think the salvation of mankind bound up in a particular creed, without considering the great revelation imparted to Peter, that, in every nation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him; and without minding the words of Paul, "One

believeth that he may eat all things; another who is weak eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth not despise him that eateth, for God has received him." The error of those, who think that God will not receive a man who has conscientiously embraced a belief which is not their own, originates in their confounding the part which the intellect has in a man's belief, with that which is a matter of the will, namely, his endeavours to attain correct opinions, for which endeavours alone he can be accountable. This fundamental error leads those who believe, that without a certain creed there is no salvation, into several other mistakes, particularly a mistake as to the character of divine justice. As they cannot help perceiving, that, in most cases, a person's creed depends less on his own exertions than on circumstances, on the time and place in which he is born, and on those by whom he is educated, they are apt to misinterpret certain passages in Scripture, which represent God's judgment as not being like our judgment. They suppose these passages to declare, that God will judge men without any regard to their own deserts, merely according to his good pleasure. They seem to suppose, that such a judgment, which is unjust not only among men, but in itself, could become just by being ascribed to God; or that the glory of God could be increased by magnifying his power at the expense of his justice. The same error, in regard to the nature of faith, leads them to magnify faith by vilifying reason; because it dares to consider as an interpolation, every dogma which contradicts the first of God's

revelations, the primitive Gospel of mankind, of which the document is still extant and complete as in the days of creation, — the moral nature of man. Faith, instead of being opposed to reason, is, on the contrary, the result of its highest efforts, which do not consist in acquiring a correct and systematic knowledge of the material objects by which we are surrounded, but in exploring the wonders of the spiritual world. But, on the other hand, many of those who, by the power of reason, have freed themselves from the forementioned error, that men are to be judged according to their creed, many of us, my friends, who consider ourselves as liberal Christians, because we disapprove every exclusive system, have fallen, I fear, into an opposite error. We believe, and I think rightly, in regard to the controversies of the present day, what Paul said with respect to those among the first Christians, that, with God, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision. But our indifference, in regard to this result of our unprejudiced inquiry into the truth of religion, has betrayed many into an indifference in regard to seeking after principles, and cherishing and maintaining those which they have adopted. If the advocates of an exclusive faith err in considering that as a matter of the will, which is merely a result of the intellect, those, who think themselves safe in their indifference, mistake that for a mere object of the understanding, which is in reality a matter of the will, for which they are accountable to their conscience and their God.

Those, who do not earnestly maintain what they believe true, are practical unbelievers; and those, who have not set their whole heart upon acquiring just ideas of God, are virtual atheists. Whether this indifference be betrayed in words or in actions, by devotedness to frivolous amusements, or by unwillingness to sacrifice time, property, and life itself, if it be required, for promoting the cause of religion, and whether the world approve or disapprove it, there is a voice within us which always condemns it, and the last and highest judgment will confirm the verdict of our conscience. I have hitherto spoken of cases and passages in Scripture, which require us to distinguish between the moral and the intellectual nature of faith, between the faith of the will and the faith of the intellect. But in most passages of Scripture, faith refers to the truth of the principles, as well as to the willingness of man to adopt and maintain them; even as in real life, the sincere intention to find moral and religious truth is commonly rewarded by success.

It is indeed not certain, that even the best efforts of a mind intent upon truth will always secure its attainment; yet so great are the means, provided by our Creator, to lead us to a knowledge of it, that there is more probability of finding, than of missing, the right course. There is, in the mind of man, a principle of dissatisfaction with any view short of truth itself; so that he is frequently sensible of the imperfection of his ideas, though they may be the most satisfactory he is able to conceive at the time. This innate longing after light, if he does not himself neglect or pervert it, is gen-

erally improved by education and society, and guided by divine revelation. Accordingly, it must be considered as a gross mistake, and, if done intentionally, as treason against the intellectual nature of man, to check his bold and unfettered search after truth, or by a sort of mockery to say, that he shall have freedom of investigation, provided it lead him to certain results. Those, who oppress and persecute others for religious opinions different from their own, those, who dread free inquiry, show, by their persecution and their fear, that they do not really believe the doctrine they profess. Truth will bear the freest as well as the closest investigation. Christianity, therefore, has nothing to fear from doubt and free inquiry. You may as well attempt to pluck up human nature by its roots, as to reason away Christianity, which is calculated to satisfy its deepest wants, by assuring men of the existence of God, of the immortality of their souls, and of their own free power to render themselves eternally happy through virtue, and perpetually miserable through vice. Therefore, my friends, let us not shun doubt, but challenge it, and follow it out wherever our fearless inquiry may lead us. It is a fact, that the soundest religious principles have, at all times, been supported by bad and by good arguments. But can this fact be considered as a proof against the truth of those principles themselves; and can you wonder, that there should be bad arguments in support of sound doctrine, when we learn, from our text, that the devils also believe the same, and tremble? Though all unsound arguments,

used in support of true principles, be swept away by the current of free inquiry, let us not consider it an injury to religion, but a blessing. Doubt not, that the zealous and unprejudiced inquirer after truth will find a rock whereupon he may build his faith, so that neither doubt can undermine, nor the floods of death can destroy it. But let us not forget, my friends, that all our exertions must prove ineffectual, that in vain we expand every sail of our minds to reach the desired port, without a propitious breeze from above. Fearless inquiry and fervent prayer are the only means of attaining to a settled conviction, an unwavering faith. To Him, therefore, who gave us this spirit of free inquiry and humble prayer, who, by his dear Son, has promised us to lead us into all truth, to Him let us look up, with implicit trust, for the guidance of his Spirit in establishing and maintaining our faith.

SERMON XV.

1 Chronicles xxii. 16.

"Arise, and be doing; and the Lord be with thee."

These were the words by which David, a short time before his death, encouraged his son Solomon to fulfil the vow of his father to build a temple to the Lord. In committing to his son this sacred trust, David enumerated to him all the costly materials which he had prepared for that magnificent edifice; he told him, also, that God himself had appointed Solomon to accomplish the promised work. Finally, he exhorted his son to be strong and of good courage. "Arise," said he, "and be doing; and the Lord be with thee." My friends, let us consider these words of sacred admonition as addressed to us. There is a work to be done, a great and glorious work, assigned to each one of us by our common Father. He himself has furnished us with the materials, and has commanded each of his children to raise, to his glory, a temple that shall endure longer than that of Solomon, longer even than the vast temple of nature that surrounds us with overwhelming grandeur. That great work assigned to each one of us, that glorious temple to be raised by each hu-

man being, what is it but the inner man, the moral and religious character of the individual? God has made us rational and moral beings, endowed with the power of wisdom and of goodness. He has revealed to us, by his own Son, how to employ these rich materials, laid up in our nature, in order to make the human character a living and everlasting temple of the Most High. By precept and example the Son of God has shown us how to lay the foundation of this inner temple, not on the quicksands of fortune and men's favor, but on the rock of truth and justice. He has taught us how to support it by unwavering faith, how to deck it out with the beauty of holiness, how to raise it to heaven by heaven-aspiring love.

My friends, if it is our intention to make our own character what it should be, a strong-hold of moral independence and a sanctuary of truth and love, — if this is our real purpose, we must not wait for others to work for us; we must not wait for God himself to do our duty, and work out our salvation, and thus to sanction our own indolence by unmerited favors. If we would build up our own character, that it may be an accepted temple of the Lord; if we desire him to be with us in this our appointed work, as he was with his servant Solomon, we must follow David's advice. We must arise early in the morning of life, and, until its latest hour, we must be up and doing.

We are admonished, by our text, and by the whole tenor of Scripture, to seek the approbation of God, and, consequently, our own happiness, not in idleness, but in action, in the vigorous and faithful exercise of

the faculties with which God has endowed us. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them," says the Saviour.

But this admonition to seek happiness in action, in constant doing, is at variance with a very common opinion among men. They believe, that happiness is to be found in being at rest, and that rest consists in doing nothing. This notion I conceive to be an error; an error, too, which is the cause of much evil, and, still more, a great impediment to good. I intend, in this discourse, to make some remarks on this opinion of rest, first, in considering it as a matter of speculation or theory, and then in its practical consequences.

As a matter of theory, it seems easy to show, that perfect rest, instead of being the highest object of human desire, is, on the contrary, to be dreaded as the greatest evil. If rest consist in doing nothing, the perfection of rest is death, the entire absence of mind, life, and action. Even the enjoyment of doing nothing, and the very idea of it, are acts of the mind; and so long as man has any idea or emotion left, he cannot be said to be at rest, if rest consists in doing nothing. Indeed, the meanest plant, which is putting forth some faint semblance of life, is a more perfect being than man when thus entirely at rest. Perfect rest, then, instead of being the highest good to be desired by man, is, on the contrary, to be dreaded as the greatest evil.

The body, indeed, requires occasional rest, and the mind, also, so far as its operations in this world

depend on the body; but even this rest is enjoyed only when it is subsequent to faithful labor, and conducive to renewed exertion. Even in a sound sleep, while the senses are closed, and the muscles, which are used for external action, are at rest, nature is still at work in winding up, and repairing the machine for new and more efficient action. The life of the inner man, the essence of the mind, consists in action. It is the nature of the human mind not to be satisfied with what it has done, or is doing, but to be constantly aiming at higher pursuits. Thus, the intelligent mechanic is not satisfied with going through a uniform set of manual operations; but he is, at the same time, thinking of some more ingenious and useful contrivance. The intelligent farmer is endeavouring to find out some still better mode of cultivating his land. The man of science is aiming at the discovery of unknown truth; the artist at the conception of still more beautiful forms.

Action, then, is the life of the mind; and the only rest it delights in, the only true rest of the mind, consists in a change of labor, an harmonious variety of occupations. He, whose mind has been engaged in hard labor, or hard study, finds rest, either in innocent recreations and interesting conversation, or in learning the news of the day, or in the enlivening dreams of poetry, or in the inspiring truths and the soul-stirring exercises of religion. As there is, in the world around us, a succession of day and night, and a change of seasons, so in the world within, in the wonderful economy of the mind, there is a va-

riety of pursuits, succeeding and relieving each other. The mind, when weary with one occupation, finds in another that true and perfect rest, which invigorates it for renewed and ever-growing action.

Let us now attend to the practical consequences of that erroneous idea of rest, as being the chief object of human desire. Let us consider the effects of this notion, first, upon the present life, our daily pursuits and our religious exercises on the Sabbath ; and then its influence upon our views of the life to come.

How many times do we see men putting forth all their faculties of body and mind, with an energy worthy of the highest object, for no other purpose than that, by doing much for a time, they may place themselves in a situation that enables them to do nothing. Indeed, it is very common among men to speak of two distinct classes in society, of laboring people and men of leisure ; and the happiness of men is measured in proportion as they belong, more or less, to what are sometimes called the lower and the higher classes in society.

But mark the course of those who have obtained the highest aim of their worldly pursuits, wealth, or an illustrious name and standing among men. Wealth, acquired by industry, becomes a curse to the possessor, unless it be used by him as a means of enriching his mind with sound knowledge, and acquiring treasure in heaven by ministering to the wants of his fellow-men. But the acquisition of knowledge, the improvement of our minds, requires great intellectual effort ; and charity toward our fellow-men calls for

self-denial and self-sacrifice. He, therefore, whose sole aim has been to make himself rich, in order to be free from all labor, unless he change his mind, and engage in higher and more arduous pursuits, knows no greater felicity, than either to brood over his dead treasures with infatuated solicitude, or to use them to his own degradation, in selfish indulgences. There is no happiness, then, to those who have grown rich by industry, except from increasing moral and intellectual exertion.

The same is to be said of the ambitious man, who has obtained an exalted name and rank, and now wishes to rest on his laurels, without aspiring after higher merit. He will soon be roused from his proud indolence by the rising merit of others. Competition will teach him, that laurels, once gathered, will not put forth new leaves of themselves; that the wreath of honor will soon wither on the brow, and become a badge of shame rather than of glory, unless it be continually replenished by fresh earnings of persevering and ever-increasing industry.

As to the forementioned distinction between laboring men and men of leisure, I believe I am borne out by experience as well as conscience in saying, that men, whether their circumstances allow them to live without labor or not, are truly respectable and truly happy only when engaged in some useful work and laudable exertion. But we must beware lest we form too narrow a conception of the character of a working man. It is, in the first place, wrong to consider all those, who are not working with their hands,

but chiefly with their minds, such as men of science and learning, as less active members of society than others. And, on the other hand, the true rank of those, who depend on manual labor, cannot be determined by their occupation. For what is the highest pursuit of man? It is the formation of a moral and religious character; and, with regard to this, all men have the same calling; and their standing in the moral world, and, consequently, their happiness, depends on their own efforts, whether they live by manual or intellectual labor. Those who do nothing to establish and advance their moral standing, they, and they alone, are the dregs of society, whether they be found at the bottom, or swim on the top. If they are powerful, they are ready to set up, and if they are weak, they are inclined to subserve, any ambitious project, however pernicious to their fellow-men. Thus we see, with regard to common pursuits, that indolence and sloth are the ruin, and faithful industry is the main spring of social and individual happiness.

But some may say, that the example of the industrious man himself teaches us, that the best joys are not derived from labor, but from rest. The father of a family, who returns in the evening from care and toil to his wife and children, soon forgets the heat and burthen of the day, and with childlike gratitude rejoices in the free grace of domestic love. If any man can be called happy before his death, is not he a happy man? And does not his felicity flow from perfect rest? He is indeed a happy man; but the fulness of his satisfaction flows from a deeper and

purer spring, than the fact that his daily toil is over. If that rest, which he enjoys, consisted in doing nothing, he would find a more perfect rest in a profound sleep, than in the exhilarating circle of his best friends. But he rejoices in the *dearest action* of his soul, in the exercise of the best powers of his mind, his deep, pure affections. It belongs, as I have before observed, to the nature of the human mind, that it finds rest from one occupation in the exercise of another. And thus, domestic love becomes to him, whose mind has been engaged in the arduous pursuits of the day, a stream of sweet forgetfulness, and leads the life-wearied spirit, even here on earth, to regions of pure delight. His home, his blessed home, gives reality to his golden dreams; it shows him, when the sun, in whose heat he has been toiling, is set, suns and worlds without number, which, though now but dimly seen, guide the timid mind onward to the invisible source of life and light, to his own birth-place, his eternal home.

The remarks I have made on the peace and rest, which are found at the domestic fireside, apply also to that day of sacred rest, upon which we meet with the family of God at the house of our common Father. The labors and heavy cares, which employ our bodies and minds on six days of the week, cease on the seventh. Do our worldly pursuits cease, merely that we may do nothing but enjoy an interval of hallowed idleness on the day of the Lord? The Sabbath, my friends, is indeed a day of rest, but of rest unto God. It is a simple, though not an acknowledged

truth, that, in religion also, and in the exercise of religion, God is not a God of the dead, but of the living. There is no day in the week on which man should be so active, as on Sunday. While the various pursuits of the week engage only particular powers of the mind, the Lord's day summons all its united faculties to the service of its infinite Author, to offer their first and best fruits to the Father of light and life. Children, who, in their daily schools, have been studying the elements of human knowledge, go together, on Sunday, to learn their best lesson at the house of God. Those, who are grown up, to whom the world is a school, and who seek the things of this world during the rest of the week, go on Sunday to search the deep things of God, and to listen to his revelations. Those, who have been suffering and starving under the heart-chilling influences of this world, the poor, the afflicted, the friendless, follow gladly the solemn and cheerful sounds which call them to the house of prayer, to renew and confirm the covenant of love with the Father of their spirits, to partake of the bread of life and the cup of salvation in Jesus Christ.

It is the day of the Lord which summons us all to search our hearts, and pass in strict review the events in our moral life during the past week, to repent and to reform, to make pious resolutions for the coming week, for the whole of our present life, yea, for the eternity of our being. Thus, the day of the Lord claims the most strenuous exercise of our best powers; it demands all the light and strength that is in us, to engage in meditating upon the duty and des-

tiny of man, upon the character and will of his Creator; in praise, and thanksgiving, and prayer, in loud anthems, and in the silent and untaught language of the heart, pleading its deepest wants before the bar of eternal justice, before the mercy-seat of infinite love. That perfect rest, which the Christian Sabbath offers to all who delight in keeping holy time, consists not in luxurious ease, that would plant itself and vegetate in the garden of life; not in a privileged indolence, that would consume the seventh part of the present life, in order to sleep, or dream upon the future. Sabbath rest consists in the freest, and strongest, and most harmonious exercise of our faculties, in tracing the course of nature, and the ways of the mind, to the mysterious source of all that is, and has been, and will be. As the inhabitants of a great and populous city, on a public day, come forth from their narrow lanes and dark habitations, to stretch and move their contracted limbs, and walk in the free air and light of heaven, so the people of God leave the narrow ways, and throw off the burden of the world, and throng to his temple, to rejoice with their brethren in meditating upon the creative wisdom, and tasting of the redeeming love, of their God.

If it is true, that, in the present life, perfect rest consists in the free, harmonious exercise of our faculties, and if our highest happiness is derived from this source, what have we to expect in the life to come? If the future state of man is life, and not death, it must be a state of action. For action is the essence of life. And if we are then still essentially the same

beings, our happiness will flow from the exercise of the same faculties we now possess; from deep *thought*, from pure *affection*, from holy *purpose*.

I have said, that our happiness, in the life to come, as well as in that which now is, will spring from deep *thought*. For the faithful student of truth, who has employed the transient moments of life to acquire permanent treasures of information, who has zealously studied the world without and the world within, and, following up these two great streams of real knowledge, has tried to ascend to the Source of all being, — what happiness can the life to come have in store, that can surpass the joy, which, in this life, he has experienced from every discovered truth, nay, from every discovered error? A mind, that has learned to love a life of intellectual exertion, can desire, in the life to come, no higher blessing, than to be endowed with power for still greater efforts, enabling him to press forward to more remote, more enlarged and exalted regions of truth. The mysteries of the present life, the dark lessons of Providence, the unexplained ministry of pain, of ignorance, of evil, in this world, will be made clear, when, from beyond the limits of our earthly existence, we can look back upon its progress and its beginning, when our boldest hopes shall become the interpreters of our present experience. Again, I have said, that our happiness, in the future as well as in the present state, will spring from pure *affection*. They, who have begun to love each other in this life, as they advance in excellence, and in the knowledge and love of excellence, will be-

come more dear to each other, more indispensable to each other's happiness. They, whose affections have begun to expand, in this life, beyond the narrow sphere of their family connexions, who have here begun to look upon each human being as a brother, will find, there, new and innumerable objects of love, when introduced to the whole immortal family of God.

Again, I have said, that our happiness in the future state, as well as in the present life, will spring from holy *purpose*. It will spring from new and more glorious triumphs over selfish desires and selfish fears, from self-denial and self-sacrifice, from offices of kindness, from errands of mercy, from the sacred ministry of Godlike, universal love. And if it is, as we suppose, a state of freedom from the body, we have reason to believe, that we shall then no longer be subject to those laws of our earthly nature, which compel us to sacrifice a part of our precious time to bodily rest. The eye of the mind, whose vision is now so often interrupted by sleep and by disease, will then be like that eye which never slumbereth nor sleepeth.

The future life has been called an eternal Sabbath; and we have seen, that the Sabbath bids every Christian call home all the powers of mind and heart, which he bestowed upon the interests of the world during the week, and to devote them to God. And so we believe, that every one, who has spent his life here on earth in acquiring light and strength for the future, will awake in the likeness of his God, and find supreme happiness in contemplating Him with all

his mind, and loving Him with all his heart, and obeying Him with all his strength.

My friends, if there be truth in these observations, let it be inscribed on our hearts. Let us live and act in the faith, that true happiness and perfect rest, in this life and in the future, are to be found, not in ease and idleness, but in following the admonition of our text. "Arise, and be doing; and the Lord be with thee."

SERMON XVI.

(DELIVERED ON THANKSGIVING-DAY.)

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1 THESSALONIANS v. 16.

"Rejoice evermore!"

"THE heart knoweth its own bitterness;" but not every heart knoweth, that it hath that within itself wherewith to make the bitter waters sweet.

The God of nature, who has taught the little insect how to draw sweet and wholesome food from poisonous herbs, has blessed, also, the understanding heart of man with the mysterious power to gather joy from trouble, love from hatred, wisdom from folly, life from death. I maintain, then, that it is in the power of every human being, under all circumstances of life, even in trouble, disappointment, and despondency, to receive and to answer the inspiring call of the Apostle, "Rejoice evermore!" Of those, to whom the Apostle writes these words, the Thessalonian Christians, he himself says, "We glory in you for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations." Patience and faith are not sources of joy, which are found only in some favored places, which flow only at particular seasons, but they are fixed for ever in the unfathomed depths of hu-

man nature, springing up into everlasting life. Indeed, there are, within and without us, numberless sources of joy, sufficient to supply every thirsting soul. But some are sources of happiness, hedged in by the selfishness of their possessors; others, though within the reach of every one, are too deep to be reached without labor and effort, and therefore deserted by many for broken cisterns on the surface.

"Rejoice evermore!" This admonition of the Apostle is accompanied by two other kindred sentiments. He says, "Rejoice evermore! Pray without ceasing! In every thing give thanks! for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." Constant rejoicing, unceasing prayer, thankfulness in every thing; — the junction of these three affecting and inspiring commandments shows a profound knowledge of the changing tides, and the steady currents, of the heart. Joy is the object of prayer, and the cause of gratitude. Our hopes and our fears, our doubts, and griefs, and disquietudes, all the overplied powers of body and mind, are prayers, petitions of suffering human nature, for that fulness of joy, which marks the supply of our wants and the gratification of our wishes. And the joy, which springs from the fulfilment of our prayers, overflows in gratitude. As, in the human body, the deteriorated and exhausted blood rushes back to the heart to be purified and renewed, and then to be propelled again, to warm, and quicken, and invigorate every part of the system; so in the soul, the wearied powers and chilled affections are continually refreshed and strengthened, and

thus a constant circulation of vital action is kept up in the inner man, by the quickening influence of joy.

It was, then, with a perfect understanding of the harmonious workings of the soul, that the Apostle bound up, in the same injunction, the three kindred emotions of prayer, gratitude, and joy. And we would open our hearts to their united influence, especially on this day, which has been set apart, in this Commonwealth, for acknowledging, with devout and grateful joy, the great blessings allotted to us by a kind and impartial Providence.

It would not be practicable, if it were desirable, to attempt any thing like an enumeration of the blessings, for which we have come hither to render thanks to the bountiful Giver. Who can record the benefits which every day brings forth, the good things which perish in the using, as well as those in which we rejoice evermore. It seems most profitable to reflect on some of the more permanent relations of life, which are the sources of duties as well as pleasures, and in which the measure of our joys is determined by the fidelity with which we meet the responsibilities which they impose. And if the consideration of these blessings should leave us better satisfied with our condition than our deserts, let us remember, that we do not meet here to congratulate each other on the attainments we have made, but rather in view of the littleness of what we have done to prepare for higher efforts. Truly, if there be any moral connected with thanksgiving, it consists in making this expression of our sentiments the precursor of and a preparation for

showing them forth by a more substantial, practical gratitude.

Let us look at the various relations of life, which give rise to our best joys and most important duties. We are members of families, inhabitants of the same city, citizens of the same country; we are men, and we are Christians. We belong to each of these social circles, which extend from our most immediate neighbourhood gradually over the whole world, and from this present moment of time onward through the ages of eternity. Each of these spheres, in which we move, devolves upon us peculiar joys, cares, and responsibilities. To begin with the nearest and dearest of our social relations; we rejoice, that we are members of families, united by the simple and holy ties of husband and wife, parent and child, brother and sister.

From the manner in which this day is, and always has been celebrated, it is most peculiarly a family day. And it is as a family day, that it is fitted to fulfil a special moral mission in society. The quiet reliance on the efficacy of the natural ties of affection, the countless and nameless comforts, which are continually and unconsciously derived from domestic intercourse, tempt us to receive the services of our nearest friends with the same thankless enjoyment, with which we habitually expect our lungs to move, and our blood to pulsate. It is only when symptoms of fever or consumption disturb our listless security, and we begin to count the pulses and watch the heavy breathings, that we learn to prize the blessing of unconscious health. And so it is, often, only when the

angel of death is hovering over our dwellings, that we begin to count, with trembling gratitude, the treasures which we possess, and to prize the vital air of confidence and kindness which our souls are breathing in at home. It is then, that all the affecting proofs of trust and patience, self-denial and tender solicitude, which we have received, day by day, from our friends, remind us of the debts we have incurred by occasional or habitual ingratitude; and the more forcibly, the less they were influenced by any expectation of acknowledgment or reward. Now I value this day as a family festival, for this very reason, that, without the aid of painful apprehension, it leads the members of each household to a consciousness, a heartfelt estimation of the blessings, the incalculable blessings which they possess in each other. This day brings together distant relations, young and old, to the same well-known fireside; the children to make a world to themselves to live in, and anticipate the future; while their elders sum up, and live over the past, the sports of childhood, the dreams of youth, the sober realities and anxious cares of manhood. To the ear of memory the past is full of music; not a single harmonious note is lost to the listening heart; the discords alone have died away in the distance.

But within the range of human experience the sun of joy never appears in the zenith; and while it illumines one side of earthly things, the other is left in shadow. While some are rejoicing, others are called to mourn; the merry shouts of the multitude do not reach the solitude, nor break the silence of

private grief. Nay, sometimes, as the wise man says, "even in laughter the heart is sorrowful." How few individuals, how few families are there, to whom this day of thanksgiving is a day of unmingled joy! Among those, who enter the house of rejoicing, there are many mourners; many, who, under gay apparel and cheerful looks, conceal a mourning heart. They have met, perhaps, within the very walls, which, in times past, echoed with the merry shouts of childhood, and which were the confidential witnesses of the silent joys of later years. But where are those venerable hands, lifted up so often for parental blessings and prayers? Where are those bright, those well-known faces, which, to the eye of affection, seemed to grow brighter and younger with every advancing year? Where are those little arms, clasping, in childish ecstasy, the paternal knee? Alas, the troubles I speak of are light, when we consider, that there are, among the living, among the children of the same house, separations wider and deeper, than any that are made by death. If, then, we would unite all hearts in compliance with the grateful admonition of the Apostle, we must not take partial ground. We must not call on all to rejoice in those things which are enjoyed only by some; such as health, prosperity, and the blessed presence of dear relations and friends. And as we have met here, as one family, in the house of our common Father, I would call your devout and grateful attention to those broad and lasting grounds of satisfaction, in which we all rejoice together, and rejoice for ever. We rejoice, we rejoice evermore,

that we are men, created in God's own image. We rejoice, that we are Americans, citizens of a free country. We rejoice, that we are Christians, members of one spiritual and immortal family.

We rejoice, that we are men, designed, by the Creator of the universe, to be his vicegerents on earth, to have dominion over all earthly things, to acknowledge none as our equals but those who bear the same family likeness, the children of the same Parent, and to recognise no one as our superior, our master, but the Lord, God himself. We rejoice, that we are men, partakers of all the glories as well as the infirmities of human nature, with its faint beginnings, its latent energies, its partial learnings and generous sympathies, with its bursts of passion and attempts at self-control, with its hopes, its fears, its boundless desires, the forebodings and pledges of an endless advancement. I rejoice, that, as a man, I can feel for all my fellow-men, of whatever name or nation, and, above all, that I can feel for the poor, the despised, the oppressed; for all those, who, in any part of the world, are deprived of the means and advantages, which God designed for the improvement and happiness of all his children. I rejoice in every generous effort to enlighten the ignorant, to relieve the suffering, to rescue the oppressed. I triumph in every victory over tyranny, prejudice, and superstition. And if I cannot aid, with my own hands, those truly great men, who, in different ages and parts of the world, have labored and suffered for the good of their fellow-men, I rejoice, that I can sympathize with all

the saints and heroes, the immortal benefactors of their race. I rejoice, that the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, has encouraged every son of man to look upon him as a friend and a brother. I rejoice, that there is in man, however degraded, a craving after Godlike perfection, a thirst after true glory, which makes him dissatisfied with any attainments, however high, short of perfect, though unattainable excellence. I rejoice in that divine instinct, which makes him cling to the most severe standard of morals, the perfect law of liberty, though he read in it his own condemnation. I see in it the genius of true humanity, the revelation of human destiny, the working of God within us, vindicating the authenticity of his own likeness.

It is the mark of a true friend of man gratefully to acknowledge any sincere endeavours to enlighten the mind, to refine the taste, and multiply the comforts of men, while his strongest sympathies, his highest admiration, belong to those sublime efforts, which aim at the civil freedom and religious improvement of mankind. It is from a grateful appreciation of these two blessings, that we rejoice in the fact, that we are Americans, and that we are Christians. We rejoice, that we are Americans, not merely because we are natives or inhabitants of a free country; — not merely because we are the privileged possessors of rights and blessings which others have acquired for us. We have a right to rejoice, that we are Americans, if we have imbibed the spirit of those pious and devoted friends of liberty, who laid the foundation

of all we enjoy, of those brave, and wise, and patriotic men, who fought the battles and framed the laws of this great republic. It is not by blindly and slavishly adopting the creeds and institutions transmitted to us by our ancestors, and entailing them upon our descendants, that we show ourselves worthy of those who framed them, but by constantly endeavouring to surpass them in wisdom, piety, and virtue, as much as they excelled their predecessors. The same spirit of religious liberty, which made them renounce the faith and the authority of the established church, calls on us to prove all things, and hold fast only what the Bible and our own reason pronounce to be good; to avoid their inconsistency in entailing upon their sons, the sons of dissenters, an exclusive faith; to let every one judge of himself what is right. And the same spirit of civil liberty, which prompted the founders of our republic to throw off the hereditary, political superstition of the old world, and to plant a new empire on the principle, that all men are born equal, and have by nature certain inalienable rights, the same spirit should induce us to act upon and carry out this great principle of American, or rather of human independence.

It should induce us to sympathize with every generous effort, which individuals and nations, in any part of the world, are making for the recovery of their natural rights; and, first of all, to employ all lawful and moral means, to make any sacrifice, for removing from our own soil the curse of slavery, baneful alike to the enslaved and the enslaver.

Whatever be my private opinions with regard to this great subject, which now agitates this nation, my conscience assures me, that, in this place, I take the general moral ground which is held by every humane citizen of this country, in the north and in the south, the ground that was held by Washington and Jefferson, as well as by Franklin and John Jay.

I know, that this country stands arraigned before the bar of man and of God for its generous profession of universal freedom and its signal inconsistency. And when I consult the voices which come to us from every quarter of the civilized world; when I look upon the successful experiment of freedom in the British West Indies; if there be any truth in the signs of the times, it is, that the sign of the Son of Man has risen upon this world, portending the destruction of slavery, and the vindication of the rights of man.

Whatever measures may be thought expedient or inexpedient for the accomplishment of this great end, so much is certain, that it is the duty of every citizen to consider and study the subject dispassionately, impartially, thoroughly; to read on both sides, and with the determined purpose to follow out whatever course may be pointed out to him by his own conscience. So much is certain, that it is the duty of every citizen, under all circumstances, to uphold the supremacy of the law of the land against mob-law, which is a violation of the sovereign will of the people, expressed by regular legislation. So much is certain, that this subject must be discussed and

will be discussed, and that free discussion is the only way to settle it satisfactorily, peacefully. Free discussion is the eye of the body politic, carefully guarded in this country by constitutional law. He, who dares to put down free discussion by lawless violence, is attempting to put out the sight, and he, who would abrogate the protecting law, is trying to tear away the eyelid, which the providence of the law has placed over the eye of the nation.

We rejoice, that we are Christians. Christianity, in its very essence, is a revelation of joy. Abraham rejoiced to see his day, through whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed. The prophets of old, the highest minds in those distant regions of the past, caught the first rays of the great luminary, while it was yet below the horizon; and their hearts, filled with holy joy, overflowed with prophecies. The wise men of the East, when they saw his star, "rejoiced with exceeding great joy." The angel of God, appearing to the shepherds in Judea, broke the silence of the night with the glorious message, "Behold I bring you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day a Saviour." The aged Simeon, who waited for the consolation of Israel, when he saw the child, took him up in his arms and blessed God, that his eyes had seen his salvation. And John, when he heard, that all men were coming to him whom he had baptized, though he knew, that, while Jesus was increasing, he himself must decrease, rejoiced, as the "friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and

heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice" ; and when the Son of God, for the first time, addressed the assembled multitude, his sermon was a revelation of joy. He opened his lips to pronounce blessings on the poor, the afflicted, the persecuted ; blessings on the meek, the righteous, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers. Grateful joy for every blessing which proceeds from the Giver of every good and perfect gift ; joyful trust and cheerful resignation under affliction and bereavements, as the appointments of the same paternal will ; joy, triumphant joy, in persecution and in death ; — these are the precepts of that Gospel, by which life and immortality were brought to light.

While we, then, cheerfully acknowledge all the earthly blessings, for which we are called upon to express our gratitude in this time of plenty, when the harvest pours forth its treasures, yet when we compare all temporal goods, such as health, plenty, prosperity, and peace, with those spiritual benefits which are the gift of religion, and of religion alone, shall we not join in the inspired strain of the prophet; "although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

My friends, if we would multiply the joys which flow from religion, let us beware lest we narrow the ground of our religious sympathy. We can sympa-

thize with the feelings of others, though we should feel compelled to dissent from their opinions. I rejoice that my heart can enter into the adoration of the sincere Catholic, worshipping the Virgin Mary; for though I think his reason mistakes the only true object of adoration, yet I think his heart is worshipping God in the beauty of holiness. I rejoice, that I can sympathize with the sincere Calvinist who worships the Trinity. For his heart is impressed, his soul is overawed, by the mysterious agency, the incomprehensible nature of God. My heart worships with him, although my reason blames his reason for placing the mysteriousness of the divine nature, not in that which is beyond, but in something which is contrary to reason. I rejoice to find, even in the superstition of the savage, traces of the religious nature of man, a germ of infinity, which, if wisely cultivated, and brought into the light of the Gospel, would become Christianity.

Finally, my brethren, while we thankfully acknowledge all that the God of nature has done for us, in making us men, rational, moral, and immortal beings; while we acknowledge all that society has bestowed, in investing us with the high privileges of freemen and the blessings of home, all that Christianity has given us, in revealing the character and will of God, the duty and destiny of man; I say, while we rejoice in all our blessings, as men, as Americans, and as Christians, let us not forget, that all the glorious powers, with which the Creator has endowed us, cannot make us excellent men, the highest civil privileges cannot make us good citizens, the exalted prom-

ises of the Gospel cannot make us real Christians, unless we make these blessings truly our own by cultivating the powers which nature has given us, unless we obey the laws which we ourselves have enacted, unless we become fellow-laborers with Christ to work out our own salvation. Nay, more, all that nature, and society, and Christianity, have done for us, is not only of itself insufficient to exalt, or to civilize, or to save us; the God, who has made us a little lower than the angels, has given us the power, by our own will, to degrade ourselves below the brute.

If it is in the power of man to make his reason and his free will the instruments of his lowest passions; it is in the power of the citizen to use his right of self-government, to legalize the absolute bondage of a portion of his fellow-men, for no other reason than that it has pleased the God of nature to set his own living image in a dark frame; it is in the power of the Christian to poison the cup of salvation, to use the influence, the hopes, and the terrors of religion, to strike the eye of the soul with blindness, and to make the consciences of men the foundation of his own demoralizing power.

It is evident from all I have said, that, great as the advantages are which are provided for us, there are greater blessings held out to us, which can become ours only as the reward of our own exertions. Then, while we give thanks for every thing, let us watch and pray without ceasing, that the light, which has come into the world, may not become our condemnation, but that, living and moving in it, as the children of light, we may rejoice evermore.

SERMON XVII.

JOHN XVI. 32.

"Behold, the hour cometh; yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me."

ALL nature, in the greatest as well as the smallest objects and events, shows forth the existence of one everlasting and universal Being; so that it is, indeed, less difficult to find God in every thing, than not to find him in any thing. Every object we perceive seems a ray, calculated to lead the eye of the mind up to the fountain head of light. Yet, as soon as the human mind attempts to ascend to the first Cause and Essence of all that exists, to know God as he is, our mental vision is as much dazzled as is our eye when fixed upon the sun. Indistinct images and conceptions are the fruits of the most persevering examination; while the dark substance of the heavenly luminary remains concealed from our sight by its own surrounding brightness. Thus it may be, that all we know about the Supreme Being is but the bright appearance or the shadow of his real nature. Yet even the bright or shadowy appearance is sufficient to convince us of the reality of the object from which it

proceeds. It is with our knowledge of God as with other religious truths. That which is revealed to man in the works and in the word of God, is sufficient to invite and encourage us to strive after a perfect conception of the nature and character of Him, who has endowed us with faculties and means constantly to enlarge and improve our ideas of the world and its Creator. But for this very reason, that our knowledge admits of infinite improvement, the most satisfactory views, which we in this life are capable of obtaining, will still leave us ground enough to say with the Apostle, "Now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face. Now I know in part; but then shall I know even also as I am known."

When we contemplate all the various modes in which God manifests himself in the universe, the power and wisdom, which, from eternity to eternity, give existence and law to all that is, and was, and is to be, which has assigned a sphere of existence to the smallest moss, as well as to the rolling star, and to systems of worlds unknown; when we contemplate his goodness, which has created living beings, capable of enjoying their existence, and man, in his own image, fit for endless improvement and happiness; when we, I say, contemplate these infinite perfections, each and all united in one perfect Being, we feel, at once, our insufficiency, and the sublimity of our own nature. For although man is not fit to perceive all the worlds around him as they are, yet, even with his corporeal eye, he is capable of descry-

ing them as little stars, while his mind enables him not only to calculate or imagine their extent, but to rise beyond them all to their infinite Creator.

God, as he is, can be known only to himself. We, his creatures, can conceive of him only as he has manifested himself in his creation; and, even in his creation, which is the reflection of his infinite nature, we can know him only in part. Yet he, himself, has implanted in us an infinite longing, and adequate faculties, constantly to enlarge and improve our acquaintance with him. He, himself, has lighted for us the torch of revelation, to trace his steps, and find our way to him, through the mysterious labyrinth of his works. He has revealed to us, particularly, that part of his nature, on which all our prospects, in time and eternity, depend; I mean, his own relation to mankind.

Our text, and all the records of the Old and New Testament, represent God as the Father of man. When we call God our Father, we ascribe to him, in his relation to man, all that is true and good, and exclude all that is imperfect, in the relation of human parents to their children. God is to man, what a human father would be to his children, if he were perfect.

There is a music, for which every one has an ear, who has a feeling heart; and, to such a one, there is no sound of full and solemn delight, none that strikes so powerfully and sweetly the vital chords of our being, and calls forth so full and swelling an accord of its deepest and dearest emotions, as the simple name of father. Such is the influence of the parental character upon every one, who has not destroyed the

native harmony of his feelings by a discordant life, that the mere name seems to retain and exercise the power of the parental voice. For it inspires every heart, that is not lost to all inspiration, with trust, gratitude, and love, the first-born feelings of human nature, upon which the God of nature has pronounced his best blessings. When, oppressed with care and gloomy thoughts, you seek consolation in the word of God, and the dear name of Father, shining on the sacred page, strikes your delighted eye, is it not as if the word of creation, "Let there be light," resounded in your heart, dispelling the night of despondency, and calling forth the most soothing recollections and the fondest anticipations, a new earth and a new heaven?

The view of God, as the Father of man, is so natural, and expresses, if rightly understood, so properly and fully, his relation to mankind, that it can hardly be called a figurative expression. It would seem as if God, in placing human beings in the situation of parents and children, and imbuing them with parental and filial affection, had intended to reveal to them his own relation to each individual and to the whole family of man. Accordingly, this view of the Deity is found, not only among Jews and Christians, but among heathens also, in ancient and modern times. But the parental character of the Deity could not be rightly understood, as long as that of human parents was not viewed in its true light; and this was not the case until all the germs of human excellence and happiness, contained in domestic life, began to unfold

under the genial influence of Christianity. Before the spirit of the Gospel had penetrated the various relations of life, it was common, among civilized and savage nations, to consider the power of parents over their children as the essence of the parental character. Children were looked upon as the property of their father, as means of extending his influence, first, over them, and then, through them, in society. But Christianity has taught parents to consider their children as beings equal with themselves by their moral and spiritual nature, and subjected to their power only for the purpose of education, which is to make them free, and capable of governing themselves. In the same manner, the paternal character of God, in regard to man, was formerly considered as a relation of power, rather than of wisdom and love; whereas, according to the Christian view of God's paternal character, his power is not the end, but only the instrument of carrying into effect his wise and beneficent design. And his design is no other than to make men truly free and happy, through their own exertion and the unfailing assistance of their Creator. Accordingly, the feeling of a Christian toward his Maker is not that of slavish submissiveness to an arbitrary power, but that which is described in the words of the Apostle, "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."

In regarding God as our Father, in the true Christian sense of the word, we consider him as our Crea-

tor, our Guardian, and our Friend. On these three fundamental qualities, which constitute the paternal character of God, I wish to offer some observations.

In the first place, God is the Creator of man; the author of his existence. It is related in Scripture, that God, after he had made sea and earth, plants and animals, created man in his own image, after his own likeness, to be superior to other creatures, and to subdue the earth. The Bible thus represents his being created in the image of God, as a mark of distinction and superiority over the rest of creation. All creation, indeed, considered as a whole, is an expression of God's glory; but, as to the various creatures, considered by themselves, man alone, of all the beings of this earth, is said to be created after the likeness of God. The other creatures on earth, as plants and animals, do not bear the image of divine perfection, in so much as they are finite in their nature, and unalterably confined to a subordinate rank in the scale of created beings. Man alone is represented as the bearer of God's own image; men are considered as the children of God; nay, they are called gods both in the Old and New Testaments. Divine nature is here ascribed to man in the only manner in which a creature may be likened to its Creator.

There can be but one God, one being of absolute perfection; but there may be many beings capable of infinite progress toward perfection. This is the sublime station assigned to man in creation. Free and boundless advancement towards his divine Original is the destiny of each human being, the eternal law of

his existence, which Christ has revealed to us in these words; "Be ye perfect, even as your Father, which is in heaven, is perfect."

The providence or guardianship of God consists in affording to every human being the means of existence, improvement, and happiness, in this life, or, certainly, in the future. These means we find, partly in ourselves, and partly in the circumstances by which we are surrounded. These internal and external provisions for man's well-being show forth, by their variety, harmony, and fitness, the wise benevolence of the Giver. As to our internal means, we need but look at the structure of the various parts of our body, the fitness of each of them for peculiar purposes, their harmony among each other, and their subserviency to the mind. By the structure of his feet, man is made to stand, and walk upright; his hands are framed for an infinite variety of occupations; his voice enables him to multiply his means of improvement and happiness by intercourse with his fellow-man.

The faculties of the mind, as they surpass those of the body in variety and power, show forth, still more clearly, the design of Providence. All the earthly blessings we enjoy in domestic life, in the protection of our civil and religious rights under free institutions, have their origin in the mind; and yet all the various attainments the human mind has already made, if you compare them with what it may attain in this life and in eternity, according to the ever-growing powers which Providence has implanted in it,—all the

high improvements we boast of, appear but as feeble essays in the school of human perfection. Thus, in every part of our being, and in the whole of it, we perceive the hand of the divine Artist, who, in this most wonderful of all compositions, has set forth the outlines of his own perfection.

On the other hand, the more we examine the outward universe and the natural course of events, the better we perceive its adaptation to the nature and destiny of man.

Nature has spread before man, all over the earth, innumerable means of support and enjoyment, suited to his wants, and his capacity to use and improve them. These external provisions are appropriate to the general and lasting, as well as the particular and temporal, interests of man. Thus, for example, the natural order of things has enabled children to derive from their parents the necessary guidance and instruction; and nature herself seems to have appointed all those who have grown up as teachers of the rising generation. These provisions of nature, for the instruction of mankind, are sufficient in general. But there have been times and instances, in which they proved insufficient; and God, by a more special interference in behalf of his erring human family, revealed to them by prophets, and established by miracles, those fundamental truths, on which the temporal and eternal happiness of man depends. And we nd, not only in the history of nations and of mankind, but every one, in his own life, may find, instances of a more special providence, than that which appears in

the organization of the universe and the natural course of events. But, surely, these more special acts of Providence proceed from the same principles of justice and love, which govern the universe. If God directs the steps of travellers in the desert to a well, which they would not have found of themselves without this special direction, he certainly acts from the same motives, which induced him to cause wells of water to spring up in every habitable part of the earth. His special provisions do not arise from partiality for some favored individual. Any person, being in the same situation as those travellers in the desert, would have experienced the same relief; for God is not a respecter of persons. There is, accordingly, not a real, but merely a relative, difference between what is called general and special providence. For all that is true in their distinction may be reduced to this obvious remark, that some measures of divine Providence apply to cases of common occurrence, and others to unusual events.

Much of the manner, in which Providence exercises a direct or indirect influence on human affairs, is concealed from our earthly understanding. But so much seems to be evident, from the previous observations on general and special Providence, that this more particular interference of God in behalf of man is not to be presumed to occur, when the general laws, which govern the common course of events, are sufficient.

These laws are, in general, highly favorable to the support, improvement, and happiness of man. It is true, the various events and processes of nature,

such as the succession of day and night, and the change of the seasons, being ordained by the Creator for other purposes besides those of man, proceed according to their own laws, without regarding his peculiar desires. But this regulation of natural events, though it sometimes counteracts the interests of individuals, is favorable to the human race in general. For it rouses the energy of man, and stimulates him to find out the laws by which the course of events is directed, and to turn them to his advantage. It is true, the earth, at least in most countries, does not, of itself, produce sufficient means of support without the additional labor of man; and in no country the mind of man improves without his own exertion. But if there is any indication of provident wisdom in the regulations of nature, it is evident in this, that the most fertile soil proves barren to him who neglects to sow in season. Surely, if nature had placed man in the situation of the plant, that finds its appropriate food in the particular spot where it grows, mankind would not have risen much beyond vegetation. Even the disappointment of our reasonable hopes, founded on diligence and perseverance in our pursuits, is frequently the means of urging us on to still greater exertion. The providence of God, in establishing the general laws by which the course of events is directed, would be still more evident in the life of man, if man would not, by arbitrary institutions and customs, prevent the laws of nature from producing their full effect on human efforts. The more the social relations of men are true to nature, so much the more

each individual appears as the author of his own happiness or unhappiness; and the result of human actions shows forth the existence of a retributory justice in nature. Vice and indolence are commonly punished by want and misery; virtue and industry are generally rewarded by happiness. These evidences of justice in the natural course of events are so common and striking, that, in the Old Testament, the temporal consequences of virtue and vice are considered sufficient motives for the conduct of men, without directing their thoughts to a just dispensation of rewards and punishments in the life to come. Many cases, however, which occur in human life, cannot be considered as rewards and punishments in the forementioned point of view. Virtue often begets misery, and vice is coupled with success; and many times prosperity and adversity are brought on by circumstances independent of human conduct. Accordingly, in these cases, the doctrine of the Old Testament, although true in regard to the general course of human affairs, proves insufficient, and has been completed by the Gospel of Christ. The New Testament represents prosperity and adversity as means of establishing and improving our moral character, by teaching us to bear evil with patience, and to use our good fortune meekly, and for the good of others. This view sufficiently explains the design of Providence in placing man in a world which is governed by natural laws, which are, in general, but not in every case, favorable to his interests. This regulation, although it exposes man's earthly existence to

accidents, that is, to events which he cannot foresee and prevent, gives him, on this very account, sufficient opportunity of establishing a character superior to any accident; to the smiles, as well as the frowns of fortune. The occurrence of such accidents, therefore, which cannot be explained as rewards or punishments, but are necessary for the moral discipline of man, is by no means a proof against an overruling, just, and benevolent Providence, but, on the contrary, a strong evidence of its existence. Every Christian rests assured, that the means of improvement and happiness, of which he is deprived by accident, will be restored to him, either by a special act of Providence in this life, or, certainly, in the future. There, our good and our bad actions will bring forth the fruits which they were prevented from bearing in this life. For, according to Christ's doctrine, the whole present life of man is a state of discipline for eternity. All iniquities, which were suffered to go on in this life, for a time, that man might have an opportunity of repairing them, will be set right; and the future will reveal to every one what divine Providence has done for him, in this life, to educate him for the kingdom of heaven.

Having explained what I consider the true view of God's providence or guardianship, I will now notice some erroneous notions concerning this doctrine. Some philosophers have thought it unbeseeming the majesty of the Supreme Being to suppose him descending so far as to take notice and care of the particular concerns of individuals. They have supposed,

that his providential agency operates only by general laws. But this view of God's providence, instead of illustrating its exalted character, resembles a picture, which looks well at a distance, but which does not bear a closer examination. Christianity has taught us to find God, not only in great historical events, but in the most particular concerns of human life, and in the secret aspirations of the heart. As a wise parent, in observing the occupations of his child, considers not what they would be to himself, but what they are to the child, so we believe, that our heavenly Guardian regards our earthly concerns as important to himself, because they are so to us, his children. A mistake, of an opposite nature, arises from too narrow a conception of divine Providence. Some think, that every thing and every event in nature must bear some particular reference to the destiny of man. This idea has, in former times, given rise to the dreams of astrology, and various attempts to read, in passing events, the preëstablished future of man. But, even in our days, many persons trouble themselves, and presume to trace the peculiar design of Providence in every event, particularly in unusual and unexpected occurrences. They seem to forget, that the world is not created and governed for man alone; that he is but one particle in this vast system of beings, which is the object of divine agency. Besides, they mistake the true ground of our belief in an overruling Providence, it being founded, not upon the influence of any particular event in the life of man, but on the whole system of means and measures adapted to the

end of his existence. Suppose a vessel has been destroyed, and many valuable lives lost, by the violence of a storm, or by the negligence of the steersman. Have we a right to ascribe this accident to a special act of Providence? We indeed perceive the general providence of God in the storms, which purify our atmosphere, as well as in the sunshine, and likewise in the moral order of things, which makes misfortune the consequence of negligence. We recognise the kind design of Providence even in this, that the natural course of events does not exclude every accident, that is, every event which we cannot foresee or prevent. For this enables and invites men to render the course of events as sure as possible by their own free and faithful exertions. Moreover, the undeniable fact, that the constitution of nature, and the course of events in general, are so evidently and wonderfully calculated for the well-being of man, should lead us to the conclusion, that the same Providence, that framed those general laws, controls, also, their effects; that it will remedy, and convert into blessings, any temporal evils which may arise from the present order of things. We ought, therefore, not to ascribe to the immediate interposition of God any accident, for which we need the assurance of unfailing and appropriate remedies in order to reconcile it with his paternal character. We believe, that God would have rescued those who have perished in the storms at sea, if he had thought it better for them and for the world to rescue them by a miracle; and we are convinced, that no accident, no contrivance, or

violence of his fellow-men, can deprive any human being of his destiny for perpetual improvement and happiness.

It is evident, from the whole representation of divine Providence, that this doctrine is by no means opposed, but, on the contrary, decidedly favorable and necessary, to the moral freedom of man. God has endowed us and surrounded us with means and motives to make ourselves good and happy. But he does not force men to use these means to their advantage; he does not make them good and happy by compulsion; since, by so doing, he would deprive them of their moral freedom, their capacity of virtue and spiritual happiness, for the loss of which, no earthly or heavenly gift would be a compensation. Even as a parent, who has the education of his child truly at heart, allows him to speak and act of his own accord, encouraging, advising, and correcting him, without attempting to force or constrain the spontaneous developement of his nature; so we believe, that God is constantly watching over every human being, and exercising his guardian care over us, either through the appointed consequences of our conduct, or by the sanctifying influences of his Holy Spirit. And this view of the relation of God to man, as a free agent, we think as much superior to his having predetermined every action of man, as we think the relation of a father to his child superior to that of a gardener to his plants.

I have spoken of God as our Creator and Guardian, and now, in order to complete my description

of his paternal character, I shall have to speak of him as the Friend of man. But in contemplating him as that Being, who has created us for infinite improvement and happiness, and has given us all the means by which we may attain the object of our existence, I have already considered him as the Friend of man. All the acts of his creation and providence are so many manifestations of his love. Nothing but infinite love can be considered as the adequate motive of God to manifest his own perfection in the creation of numberless beings, which, by the enjoyment of their own existence, are made partakers of the infinite happiness of their Creator.

The love of God, although it is poured out like the light of the day over all his works, is, in itself, an inscrutable mystery. It is a well, whose overflowing waters, though pure and clear as the day, are dark through its fathomless depth. It is in his relation to man, that God has shown forth the perfection of his love. To man he has made known his existence and designs, not only through the superior blessings with which he has surrounded him, but likewise by an immediate and most intimate revelation of his love, in the communion of the soul with its Maker. When the spirit of love, which is implanted in every heart, awakes and rises in devotion to the Father of spirits, we experience, in our feelings, that our prayer is heard, and our love returned, and we comprehend the meaning of that inspired saying, "God is love."

After having contemplated God as the Creator, and the Guardian, and the Friend of man, let us now

cast one parting look upon the whole of his parental character. The idea of God, as the Father of man, pervades the whole system of our religion. Accordingly, the erroneous views, which have been held concerning his parental character, have had the most injurious influence on the whole cause of Christianity. Instead of approaching their heavenly Father with filial trust, men have invoked his name with slavish fear. Instead of relying on his invariable justice, they have courted his special favor. Instead of fearing him from love, they would fain have loved him from fear.

On the other hand, the right view of the paternal character of God, as revealed in the Gospel of his Son, cannot fail to produce the most salutary influence on the life of individuals, and on the whole character of society. This idea of God exists in the mind of man before he is capable of referring it to its true object. The child sees his Deity in his parents, and his brothers and sisters are to him the whole family of man. As his mind unfolds, he perceives, that his parents are only the temporary representatives of a Being, to whom they themselves look up as their Father; and this view of God, as the Parent of mankind, which has grown up with him, leads him, by degrees, to regard all mankind as his brothers and sisters. He no longer feels himself a stranger on the earth, with whatever portion of the human family his fate may connect him; for he is, wherever he may be, in the hands of his Father, from

whose protection no one can exclude him, except he separates himself from Him by breaking the commandment of filial and brotherly love. And though all those, whom he loves, and on whose love he relies, be scattered, and he be left alone on the earth, he looks up to heaven, and says, with Jesus, "I am not alone, because the Father is with me."

SERMON XVIII.

(DELIVERED ON CHRISTMAS-DAY.)

ROMANS XII. 15.

"Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep!"

THE sentiment, contained in these words, is expressed in the form of an admonition, a commandment. And who is there, that does not feel, while inclination prompts him to rejoice in his own success, and mourn over his own misfortunes, that his inmost heart owns the justice of the Apostolic injunction, bidding him to rejoice and to mourn for others as well as for himself.

The words of our text, then, have the moral force, as well as the form of a commandment. Still, this commandment, which enjoins sympathy as a duty, differs, in some respects, from others, which require certain actions or omissions, over which the will of the individual has a direct control. The thief, when he is ordered to steal no more, the slanderer, when he is commanded not to bear false witness, has but to restrain his hand and his tongue. But, when the ungrateful man is reminded of his duty to his benefactor; when the haughty oppressor is called to reverence

humble virtue; when the cold-hearted self-seeker is admonished to rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep, the burthen of these injunctions evidently does not consist in certain voluntary actions or omissions, but in a state of mind, a disposition of the heart, which the simple fiat of the will cannot create out of nothing. Every one can keep back his hand or his tongue; but he cannot make himself feel respect, sympathy, or affection. Hence, some have argued, that feelings cannot properly be enjoined as duties; for that this is to require of the individual what he is not able to perform. But the difficulty here lies in the form of expression, rather than in the thing itself. I cannot make myself feel gratitude, but I can restrain my selfish propensities, which alone prevent the heart from going forth, unbidden, to return kindness for kindness. You cannot, by a mere effort of will, light up your countenance with heartfelt joy, or fill your eyes with true tears, at the sight of the happiness or misery of others. But you can break the ice-crust of selfishness, which alone prevents the fountains of the heart from overflowing with sympathetic joy or sorrow. The alleged difficulty, then, in admitting the propriety of those commandments, which enjoin *sentiments*, over which the will has no direct control, instead of voluntary actions or omissions, is only a nominal difficulty. When we are commanded to love and to reverence, the direct object of such injunctions is the restraint of our selfish passions, over which the will has all requisite power, and which alone prevent those senti-

ments, which are required of us as duties, from exercising their legitimate sway over our thoughts and our actions.

There are various ways, in which men may be induced to receive and follow the voice of duty. With regard to duties of sentiment, more especially, there is, perhaps, no way so well fitted to bring them home to all hearts, as that of exhibiting them in living forms, by the example of men, whose character was moulded by right sentiments.

Now there is no character, in which the words of my text are so truly and fully exemplified, as in that of Jesus Christ. It was marked by no trait more distinctly, than by this hearty and ready disposition to rejoice with the joyful, and sorrow with the sorrowful. It is, then, the tender, sympathetic, affectionate character of Jesus, of which I intend to speak.

And let me say, in passing, that this subject seems to me peculiarly appropriate to this occasion; I mean, to the anniversary of the birth of Christianity, which we commemorate. The subject is more appropriate, certainly, than the controversial divinity, and the sectarian polemics, which are made to furnish the topics of many a Christmas sermon. I can hardly conceive of a more perverse, I might almost say, a more sacrilegious mode of commemorating the birth of Jesus, of him, whom angels announced as the heavenly bearer of peace and good will to man, than by a bigoted, contentious, and illiberal harangue from the pulpit.

When I speak of the affectionate character of Jesus,

my words are not intended to embrace the whole of that benevolence, or self-sacrificing love, which was the fundamental and ruling motive of all he said, and did, and endured. My meaning may be most clearly illustrated by the conduct of Jesus, and the comment of the Jews upon it, after the death of his friend Lazarus. We are told, that, when Jesus saw Mary weeping, and the Jews also weeping, who came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, and wept. "Then said the Jews, 'Behold how he loved him!' And some of them said, 'Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?'" His tears were taken, by the natural sentiment of all present, as proofs of his affection. But some were disposed to demand of him, who had the requisite power, more effectual evidences of his love, by actions. And Jesus himself, afterwards, furnished such evidence; far greater, indeed, than that which had been indicated by the Jews, by raising his friend from the dead.

But though he felt within himself the power of manifesting, by action, the reality of his love, yet he did not, on this account, repress the sigh and the tear, which the sorrow of the sisters and friends of the deceased drew forth from his sympathizing breast. If he had done violence to his feelings, and withheld the involuntary tribute of an overflowing heart, would the character of Jesus have been exalted by this act of stoicism?

We recognise, and we reverence in Jesus, the perfection of human nature. A human being, without

that tender sensibility, which shall prompt him to rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep, is a mutilated copy of the image of the God of love. Actions, benevolent deeds, are, indeed, the most perfect manifestation of the principle of love; but practical kindness, efficient charity, is not always within the reach of the most tender-hearted and benevolent; and, where deeds are out of the question, kind feelings, sincere wishes, fervent prayers are actions in the sight of Him, who sees and considers the heart. And, even when we are capable of something more efficient than the mere expressions of sentiment, still these are of no small value. Even in the case of Jesus at the grave of Lazarus, the stupendous act of raising the dead does not make us forget the tears, the love-tokens of tender humanity, that preceded the manifestation of divine power. It is true, we know the tree by the fruits, and we value it for its fruits; but who, on this account, would despise the transient, useless beauty of the blossoms?

Again, in the story of Jesus raising the young man at Nain; when we read, that he touched the bier, and, at the sound of his voice, he, that was dead, sat up, and began to speak, our mind is satisfied, that no one could do such works, except "God be with him." Yet our hearts would not be reconciled to lose the affecting circumstances of this act of superhuman power. It makes us sad, yet we cherish our sadness, when we read, that he was "the only son of his mother," and she was "a widow," and that

the Lord, when he saw her, had compassion on her, and said unto her, "weep not," and that, when he had restored the young man to life, "he delivered him to his mother."

And thus, when little children were brought to Jesus, that he might touch them, he not only did what was requested, and reproved the disciples, who would not admit the little ones, but "he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them."

This tenderness was blended in Jesus even with the strongest feelings of disapprobation, excited by the wilful unbelief of the Jews. It is said he "looked upon them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts." And thus he wept at the sight of Jerusalem, though the terrible fall, that awaited the devoted city, was a just retribution.

The story of Jesus abounds in these beautiful and affecting proofs of the tenderest sensibility. It was manifest in his intercourse, not only with his fellow-men, but with his Father in heaven. His acts of devotion were not vague aspirations and reachings of the soul after an infinite something; the prayers of Jesus were responses to that voice from heaven, which said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Who is there, that does not feel this intimacy, this parental and filial union, when he reads how Jesus, in the anticipation of his martyrdom, "lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, 'Father, the hour is come'; 'I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do; and now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine

own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.' 'O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee; but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it; that the love, wherewith thou hast loved me, may be in them, and I in them.'" And, again, in the garden of Gethsemane, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." And, then, that last ascension of soul from the agony of the cross, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

Who can read these words without doing homage to the religious sensibility of Jesus. The deepest and richest natures, alone, are capable of such mighty swellings and heavings from the depths of the soul; and the attractive power of the great luminary of the spiritual world, alone, can raise the highest tides of human feeling.

In his intercourse with his fellow-men, how affable and accessible, how ready was he to enter into all their interests, hopes, and fears, to share, and, by sharing, to heighten their joys, and alleviate their afflictions. How movingly simple is his manner of reproving the Jews for this want of sympathy, when he compares them to children in the market-place, whose companions cry out complainingly, "We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept." Instead of standing aloof in cold majesty, we see him entering into these everyday pleasures and trials. The

Son of man comes eating and drinking, with the pharisee and the publican, the righteous and the sinner. He holds his miraculous powers not too precious to increase the joy of the wedding feast. And when his hour was at hand, and he sat down with his disciples to his last meal, what a spirit of tender friendship, of brotherly affection, is expressed in these words; "With desire have I desired to eat this passover with you, before I suffer." And, then, his words after the supper, "I will not drink, henceforth, of this fruit of the vine, until that day, when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." How full of sympathy is his defence of his disciples against the pharisees, when they found fault with them because they did not fast often, like themselves and the disciples of John. "Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, while the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days."

When his soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death, and overcome by a feeling of loneliness, he desired three of his disciples to tarry and watch with him; and when, on rising from prayer, he found them asleep, and said to them, "What, could you not watch with me one hour?" he immediately tempered his reproof by the words, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Again, how mild, one might say, how fearfully mild was the punishment he inflicted upon the disciple who thrice denied him. It was a look, a look

of sorrowing love, which struck condemnation into the heart of Peter, and made him burst into tears. The work of reformation was begun; the spirit of faith, that struggled, in the soul of Peter, with the demon of fear, alternately conquering and conquered, was strengthened by an overwhelming sense of shame, and an intolerable consciousness, that, in denying his friend, he had wounded his own soul. The work of reformation was begun, I say, — it was completed, when he, whom the gates of death could not contain, reappeared to his struggling disciple. Jesus came not to remind Peter of his presumption in declaring himself ready to go with his Master, even to death, nor to upbraid him with his denial. That thrice repeated question, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" that heart-searching question of unmerited confidence was sufficient to change his fitful enthusiasm into that abiding principle of perfect love, which casteth out fear.

The same power, the same irresistible influence of confiding love was made manifest, when many of the Jews, who had hitherto followed Jesus, "went back, and walked no more with him." "Will ye also go away?" said Jesus to the twelve. What heart is there, that does not reply with Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." His instructions, too, even when intended, chiefly, to enlighten the minds of his disciples, were always directed to the understanding heart, and not to the heartless understanding. When Thomas doubted, and would not believe in the resurrection, except on

the evidence of his own senses, Jesus taught him in the way which the doubter himself required, — by his bodily presence. But it was not an appeal only to his senses, when Jesus called his attention, not simply to his body, but to his wounds. "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing."

The irresistible demonstration to his senses would probably have drawn from Thomas the simple declaration, "Lord, I believe;" but that homethrust to his affectionate heart left him no power of utterance, but for this burst of feeling, "My Lord and my God!"

What language, but that of Jesus himself, can express the tenderness, that marks his last conversations with his friends, as they are related by the disciple whom Jesus loved. "I am the vine; ye are the branches; ..... abide in me, and I in you." "Let not your heart be troubled. ..... I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you." "In my Father's house are many mansions. ..... I go to prepare a place for you, ... that where I am, there ye may be also."

That heart-winning and all-constraining tenderness, which strikes the reader, even at this distance of time, as the soul of his conversation, seems to have marked the very tones of his voice from every other. When Mary stood at the sepulchre weeping, and saw him standing before her, without knowing that it was Jesus, the same whom she sought among the dead,

the single word, "Mary!" waked all the slumbering echoes in her desolate heart, and drew from her the cry of recognition, "Master!"

The affectionate character of Jesus possesses the two essential attributes of true love. While his affections were continually extending to every new object, that came within his blessed influence, the ties, which he had already formed, became even more intimate and enduring.

The ever growing, ever expanding nature of his love may be traced in the story of his life. Only follow him in his course, from his first love, his affection for his mother, to his high and warm admiration of John the Baptist, — his gathering around him, one by one, the little flock, that knew the voice of the true Shepherd. Still more, it is the nature of true love, like water, continually to descend and seek the lowest places, to enrich and bless them. The true physician goes to seek the sick; the faithful shepherd goes in search of the lamb that has strayed; the father's heart warms towards the returning prodigal. And then, again, see him weeping over Jerusalem; see him laboring, dying for mankind. The enduring nature of his affection is expressed in those affecting words, "Having loved his own, which were in the world, he loved them unto the end!" When the band of officers, sent by the chief priests, came to seize Jesus and his followers, he delivered himself up, while he thought only of saving his friends. "If therefore ye seek me, let these go their way."

On the cross, in the midst of his agony, the whole

strength of his affection centred upon his mother and the disciple whom Jesus loved. "Behold thy mother!" and "Behold thy son!" It was not till after he had established a maternal and filial union between his best friend by nature, and his best friend by choice, that his affections resumed their unbounded range, in declaring the great work of benevolence, which God gave him to do, finished; in praying for his crucifiers; in commending his soul to God.

My friends, I have set before you the affectionate character of Jesus, as it stands recorded by some of those who knew and loved him best. I have nothing to add, either by way of comment or admonition. Words could only weaken and mar the impression, which the mute eloquence of such facts never fails to make on the listening heart. Let me, in parting, only remind you of what the Saviour declared to be the practical test, by which the true friends of Jesus may be known. "By this shall all men know, that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

SERMON XIX.

Acts xvii. 28.

"In Him we live, and move, and have our being."

These words occur in the sermon of the Apostle Paul to the Athenians. This passage is closely connected with that which follows immediately after it, "that we are also his offspring"; a truth, which, as the Apostle says, was recognised by their own poets. Indeed, not only poets and sages had expressed this thought, but the doctrine of one supreme, all-pervading, and all-controlling Power may be obscurely traced in all the different systems of polytheism. It is recorded of one of the most ancient nations of the old world, that, while they were yet uncivilized heathens, and believers in many gods, they would not represent them in any shape or form, but in sacred groves adored that secret something, which they contemplated in devotion. And thus we find among our Indians, amidst many superstitious notions, the recognition of the great Spirit, of whose powerful presence they are reminded by every signally grand, awful, or merciful event, which they experience. In short, whatever be our creed or sect, these words,

that "in Him we live, and move, and have our being," speak to every heart, in its own language, of what all have sometimes felt, however vaguely, that, as we are surrounded by the atmosphere, from which we draw our breath, and as our body stands upon the earth from which it is taken, so our spirit, the principle of thought and of love within us, is compassed and upheld by omnipotent and omnipresent Intelligence and Love.

Whenever I read these words of the Apostle, they call up, in my mind, the image of every thing great and beautiful, that has ever moved before my senses, or lived in my imagination, and become a part of my conscious being. Heaven-bound mountains, and the boundless sea; works of architecture, of painting, and of poetry, produced by human genius as the credentials of its divine mission; the heroic actions and more heroic sufferings, the glorious achievements and still more glorious failures of aspiring and persevering virtue, — all these objects of contemplation, amazement, and delight, are brought before me by the words of the text. But as I strive to enter more and more into the depth and fulness of meaning, that is bound up in this text, all those glorious realities in nature and in man appear to me unsatisfactory, and the fond admiration, with which I behold them, seems like idolatry, until I view them as manifestations of that incomprehensible, though omnipresent Power, in whom alone we live, and move, and have our being.

The simple and sublime truth, embodied in these words, is the same at all times, and may be felt

equally in all places. But it would seem as if this quickening truth came home to us more readily and fully, when, surrounded by the living works of nature, we are breathing the free air of the country, than amid the dead productions of human industry, when our steps, our looks, and our very thoughts are shut up within the narrow walls of a crowded city. In the wild woods, amidst trees, and shrubs, and plants of every shape and color, we feel as if the same power, that animates and expands so many unknown germs into an infinite variety of forms of vegetable and animal life, was quickening, enlarging, and invigorating every faculty of our own material and spiritual being. We feel and we are convinced, that this endless variety of form and color, sound and motion, so destitute of every thing like preconceived plan and studied arrangement, is yet pervaded and controlled by the omnipresent Spirit of harmony, which moves the inmost chords of our own nature. The wilderness seems to us as a vast temple, full of animated paintings, and living statuary, and sacred music, and we return, unconsciously, to the primitive worship of the uncivilized children of nature, who, in the silent gloom of primeval forests, perceived the footsteps, and listened to the voice, of the present Deity. And thus, in the midst of the ocean, when the calm face of the waters opens a prospect far exceeding the utmost stretch of our vision, and tempts the inner eye to venture a glance into the unseen regions of infinity; or, when wind and water conspire to dispute the controlling power of human prudence and courage, when,

with wanton fury, they toss and throw the mighty ship, like a football, over the vast play-ground, while the failing hope of life takes refuge in an unfaltering faith in immortality, — I feel as if the spirit, that now moves on the placid face, and, again, stirs up the dormant passions of the mighty deep, were not a strange and hostile power, but a ministering angel of Him, in whom we live, and move, and have our being.

The strong impressions made on our minds by what is sublime and beautiful in natural scenery; by the mighty movements and the profound stillness of the boundless sea; by the star-light night, introducing us to an innumerable assembly of distant worlds; by mountains and cataracts, and all the living wonders of the vegetable and animal world; — these soul-stirring impressions raise our thoughts and our desires beyond the narrow interests of the day, and the anxious cares for the morrow. They prompt us to look, and to set our affections, not on the things that are seen and temporal, but on those that are not seen and eternal.

But the heartfelt assurance of the presence of God, the blissful certainty, that in Him we live, and move, and have our being, does not depend upon natural scenery, upon the visible glories of the material world; and when we pray, "Thy kingdom come," we do not expect it will come with outward observation, or that we shall be able to say, "lo here, and lo there"; but if it come at all, we know it must be within us. The poorest mechanic, or laborer, whose mean tenement and obscure workshop are never visited by the rays of the sun, dwells within

sight of wonders and glories, before which the sublimity of the Alps and the Falls of Niagara sinks into insignificance. For he, by his own effort, is able to raise himself from the low place, assigned to him in society, to a moral elevation, from which he looks out upon an endless course of progress from strength to strength, and from glory to glory. As soon as he has learned to think of himself as a member of the great family of immortal spirits, the narrow space, in which the poor man numbers his days, expands into a world, in which every one chooses his own place, and builds up his own neighbourhood, in which every one sows the seeds of his destiny, and reaps the fruit of his doing. That, which constitutes our being, is not a transient phenomenon, a plaything of chance, but a reality, based on an unchangeable and eternal foundation; for, as the Apostle says, man has his being in God, — in God, the Beings of beings. He is, and he lives in God. The life of man, the vital element of humanity, is something more than a principle of motion and sensation; it is a life of independent thought, of holy affections, and beneficent action; it is the life of the soul in God.

Man is, and lives, and moves in God, whether he moves in what the world calls the higher or the lower walks. He, who has appointed to the stars their courses, has laid out, for each human being, a sphere of existence, of intellectual and moral action, and spiritual progress, through the ages of eternity. The performance of the smallest duty, in the humblest walk of life, invests him with the merit of a faithful

servant, nay, with the glory of a fellow-worker with God. As long as he obeys his laws, he moves in God. He is a star, revolving around its central sun.

My friends, the words of our text have both a natural and a moral meaning. In their natural sense they teach, that our being, with all its faculties and powers, is derived from God, and dependent upon God. We live in him, inasmuch as the principle of life, of physical, as well as of intellectual and moral life, is a gift subject to the discretion of the Giver. We move in God, inasmuch as our actions and active powers are delegated powers, controlled by the constituent will. We have our being in God, inasmuch as we are creatures and dependents of Him, who is the Source of all being. But the text has also a moral meaning. As moral agents, we are not only creatures, but, by the exercise of our own free will, we are destined to be the creators of our moral being, that is, of our own character. It depends upon ourselves, whether we will live, and move, and have our being in God, or in the idols of our carnal passions and selfish interests. It depends upon ourselves, whether, in our intercourse with our fellow-men, our words and our actions be guided by the love of favor and the lust of gain, or by the spirit of truth, justice, and benevolence ; it depends on ourselves, whether our inward life shall be under the legitimate government of principle, or under the lawless sway of passion ; it depends on ourselves, whether our whole being shall be a personification of the principle of good, or of evil. To move in God is to move (that

is, to speak and act) in conformity with his holy laws; to live in God is to find supreme happiness in a life devoted to his service, and blessed by his love; to have our being in God is to make our own character the image of the living God. This is the import of those divine words, uttered by the lips of our divine Master. "Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." Then, my friends, as we have received Christ Jesus, let us walk in him, grounded and built up in him. Then shall we be one with Jesus, and one with God. For our lives and our consciences will bear witness, that "in Him we live, and move, and have our being."

SERMON XX.

2 Corinthians iv. 18.

"Look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen."

We are all familiar with these words of the Apostle. We have heard them from the pulpit; we have seen them on the sacred page. Let us ask ourselves, whether, in hearing or reading these words, we have regarded the Apostle's advice, to look not at the things which are seen, but at those which are not seen. Have we learned the heavenly lesson they were intended to teach? Have we regarded chiefly the dead letter, or have we endeavoured to enter into the meaning, and imbibe the life-giving spirit of these words? The more you reflect upon them, so much the clearer will be your conviction, that the whole object of Christianity, the coming of our Saviour, the divine mission of the Gospel of truth into the world, is revealed in these words.

When you consider the time when, and the men to whom Christianity was first preached, you find many circumstances, which must have given an immediate and peculiar importance to this doctrine of the transient and deceitful nature of the things which are seen, and

the reality and eternity of the things which are not seen. Think on the Jews, at the time of our Saviour. What were their ideas of religion and morality; their ideas of God and his Christ, of human life and human excellence? The signs and words, by which the Lord of heaven and earth had manifested himself to that favored nation, had failed to produce, on their minds and hearts, the effect which was their true object, to lead their minds from the visible evidence to the invisible truth; and when the Saviour of the world appeared to fulfil the glorious promise, that, in the family of Abraham, all the nations of the earth should be blessed, they continued asking for signs and wonders, while upon the truths which the signs and wonders were intended to reveal, they looked with indifference and unbelief, nay, with hatred or contempt. Those, who looked only upon the things which are seen, how could they discern the spiritual mission of Jesus, and, with the eye of faith, behold the Father of spirits?

Let us see what were their ideas of human life, its great objects, its true good, its real evils. They honored the proud pharisee, glorying in the show of austerity and sacred zeal; they despised the humble publican; they revered the high priest in his royal apparel, and despised the Son of God, clothed with humility. They esteemed and worshipped all that made a man conspicuous among his fellow-men, the factitious distinctions of society; and they valued not, they saw not, what was high and eternal in their common nature. It is evident, that, to such men, the

doctrine of the eternal reality of what is invisible, must have come home with peculiar force; it was laying the axe at the root of evil; it was sowing the seeds of light and life.

Enough has been said to show that the doctrine of Christianity, that unseen things are real, was of vital importance to those to whom it was first preached. But of what importance, it may be asked, can this doctrine be to us, who have been taught the word of life from infancy? My friends, one serious look upon our conduct in private and in public life, is sufficient to convince us, that the truth, declared in my text, has lost nothing of its practical importance, nay, that even now the whole duty of the Christian ministry may be said to consist in calling upon all men to look, not at the things which are seen and temporal, but at those which are not seen and eternal. It is natural, from our mode of life, even without taking into account any criminal pursuits of pleasure, that the minds of most men should be turned away from the great interests of the soul, and chiefly devoted to temporal objects. How many hands and minds are engaged, every day, in preparing our food, clothing, and all the other necessaries, comforts, and luxuries of life, many, if not most, of which seem to be suggested by a common principle, to starve and kill the mind, that the body may live and thrive. Let us look upon the affairs of men, and the ways of the world, not with the eye of the austere philosopher or religionist, but with a heart that would have all men enjoy as much as life can afford. How much

real happiness is wantonly thrown away, how much misery is conjured up from nothing, until the fancied vision becomes a dreadful reality to the diseased mind.

Sound judgment and good taste are sacrificed to the factitious requirements of fashion; the insignia of office are thought more of than its functions; the fashion of the garment is prized more than its use, and often more than the person who wears it; domestic happiness is sacrificed to a splendid establishment; the dignity of the magistrate and the clergyman is considered an appurtenance of the bench and the pulpit, the authority of which is deemed sufficient to awe into faith and obedience the independent mind. Wherever you look, you find examples of the Gospel doctrine reversed; — meat is more than life, raiment more than the body, and the body more than the unseen mind. In such a state of society, what avails the voice of the ministry; — what the word of Christ himself, insisting upon the worthlessness of all things visible, when compared with the unfading glories of the spiritual world? The voice of God in the heart tries in vain to make itself heard, in the pathless and endless desert of the worldly and unprincipled mind. The call to peace and order becomes a signal of war, amidst the anarchy of lawless passions. The solemn warnings and earnest appeals of the invisible preacher within are heard, resisted, and neglected, until the small voice becomes dead silence to him who has made the world his oracle and his God. When the eye of the mind is blind to the evidence of the things which are not seen, the senses turn preachers of in-

fidelity. And to him who believes in nothing but what he sees and hears, the invisible realities of religion appear like fables, invented to make credulous children of inquiring men. A proud ignorance of all that enlarges and elevates the mind beyond this earth, is hailed as noble freedom. In such a state of society, the cause of Christ, the cause of spiritual truth, would be utterly and irrevocably lost, were it not for one true prophet that is still left, one who has never bowed his knee to any idol, who has never spared the things that are seen, and never touched those things which are not seen. When all the arguments, which this life affords of one that is to come, are slighted, death, the mediator between time and eternity, takes up the deserted cause, and pleads it amidst the revelry and the heartless sophistry of the world. The approach of death, — and we know that every moment of life brings us nearer to its end, — calls upon every living soul to review the whole inventory of his earthly possessions, and see if there is any one of his treasures that will not fall to the heirs of mortality. Death, by tearing off the earthly covering, brings to light the essence of our being, and thus the destroyer of life becomes the most powerful preacher of immortality.

But why should we wait until death comes to force upon us a truth, which nature and revelation are ever ready to teach us at every moment of our lives? To him who has not darkened his heart and mind, the whole visible creation is a continual revelation of the spiritual world and the Father of spirits. For, as the

Apostle says, "the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead." Ask yourselves, what is it in all we see and hear, that excites our deepest interest and highest admiration. You will find, that, if we love and admire the things which are seen, it is because they remind us of greater things, which are not seen, the perfections of the visible world, bearing reference to its invisible glories. When you look upon the ocean, and you seek in vain a place where to rest your eyes in the immeasurable distance, an idea of infinite extent is called up in your mind; the motion of the wind, which blows you know not whence or whither, speaks to you of unseen, infinite power; the deep blue sky, of infinite purity. But this infinity, with which your mind is impressed, does not dwell either in the ocean, the wind, or the sky; it is a thought which shows forth the nature of your own mind, and which finds an appropriate object only in Him, in whose image we are created. What is it in the vegetable and animal world, that excites your delight and admiration? Is it the external form of the plant and the tree; or is it not rather the power of life, that sleeps unseen in the smallest seed, until it draws nourishment from earth, water, air, and light, to spread out in branches and leaves, blossoms and fruit? In the animal kingdom, it is life, that wings its way through the air, and peoples the desert deep. The wonderful changes and metamorphoses in the insect world, in which life and death appear

continually to be exchanging parts with each other, lead the reflecting mind of man to a consideration of the continual changes in his own being from infancy to age, and make him look forward to that great event, which shall redeem him from the bondage of earth to the freedom of heaven. Thus, the brightest and most striking scenes in nature are only the faint emblems, that shadow forth the wonders of the invisible world.

Let us now reflect upon man, to see whether it be true, also, in regard to him, that those things in his nature, which are not seen, are more estimable and real, than his visible qualities, however conspicuous. In the actions of men, what is it that commands our esteem and admiration? Is it the motion of the hand that performs the deed, or is it the invisible motive, that leads to the act? What is the object of our deepest affections? Is it the beautiful form, the face, or the figure of your friend, or is it that invisible something within, which gives even to the most deformed human countenance a beauty, that far outshines all external graces, — that unseen power in the soul, which is strong enough to induce the devoted child to waste his tender frame at the sick-bed of a parent, whose withering old age is dearer to him than his own young life, so full of bright and endearing prospects. Whatever betokens a superiority of the invisible principle in man over the visible, be it in appearance and manners, conduct or character, this, and this alone, is truly estimable and lovely.

A superficial reflection upon his own nature is sufficient to convince every one, that he himself is a

being distinct from his body. When his hands are not able to move, the will, that moved them, remains the same; and when the evening of life has obscured his sight, the inward eye is still awake, and the darkness, that has settled upon his senses, cannot break in upon the daylight of his soul. It is only by being engrossed in external objects, by devoting his best powers, his thoughts and affections, to the gratification of his senses and appetites, that man ever loses sight of that simple truth, that this visible body of his, is not he himself; that he is a spirit, a native of an invisible world. Those men, therefore, we consider as the greatest benefactors of their race, who have endeavoured to turn the attention of man from external objects, and direct it to himself, and to fix it, not upon the outside of his being, but upon the inner man. It was the inner man, whom Jesus Christ came to save from degrading dependence on the body, by bringing life and immortality to light. Whoever, therefore, has looked into this perfect law of liberty, who has learned to find his own true self, not in his body, but in his mind, knows, that the grave cannot rob him of those things, which alone make life valuable to him. But, as the Scripture says, they joyfully take the spoiling of their goods, knowing, in themselves, that they have in heaven a better and an enduring inheritance. My friends, if we steadfastly look at those things which are not seen, if we set our affections on the things which are above, we can look calmly forward to the moment, (whether it be far off, or near at hand,) when earth shall reclaim this borrowed

furniture of our minds ; for we know, that our minds, that we, ourselves, are not from below, but from above, and that, when dust returns to dust, our spirits shall rise to that state of light, to which now our thoughts and our hopes aspire ; and that the heavenly Friend, whose footsteps we have endeavoured to follow here on earth, will not fail us when we leave it, but will receive our souls, and bid us welcome to our Father's presence.

SERMON XXI.

ROMANS XIV. 17.

"The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

THE declaration of the Apostle, that religion, the kingdom of God within, is not meat and drink, contained a simple, strong, and salutary lesson and reproof for the heathens, who made the worship of some of their gods to consist in feasting and carousing; and the same words implied a more delicate and equally salutary lesson and reproof for the Jewish converts to Christianity, who thought they must show the sincerity of their conversion by eating and drinking those things, which the Jews, by their law, were not allowed to partake of, and who thus shocked the feelings of those Jews, who thought their conversion to Christianity did not exempt them from the prohibitions of the law. Paul himself held, that no article of food was in itself unclean; but "to him," he says, "that esteemeth any to be unclean, to him it is unclean." But, at the same time, he warns those of his friends, who, like himself, thought that religion did not consist in abstaining from certain articles of food, not to suppose, that partaking of those

things, forbidden to the Jews, was a part of Christianity, but that, on the contrary, the spirit of the Gospel prevented them from doing any thing, that seemed indifferent to themselves, if it gave offence to others.

Besides these different ways, in which the words of the Apostle were applicable to the heathens and the Jewish converts of his time, there is a sense, in which they are important to all men. They teach us not to confound the things appertaining to the kingdom of God, righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, with those things, which, like meat and drink, are important to us, not as spiritual and immortal beings, but as creatures of time and sense. They warn us against degrading religion, by looking upon it as an instrument of worldly advantages.

It is in this light, that I wish to present to you the truth contained in the text. I wish to point out some cases, in which, amongst us, religion is often considered and valued, chiefly, as a means and instrument to secure to us worldly advantages and comforts.

There are, to be sure, many cases, in which this worldly use, or abuse of religion is condemned by all. We all condemn the conduct of a person that professes religion, or a certain form of religion, in order to secure to himself the votes of the majority of his fellow-citizens for a public office, or any of those advantages and comforts, which the community, to which he belongs, may be disposed to impart only to those who are of the same household of faith. We equally condemn the conduct of a person, who,

however sincere in the profession of his faith, makes it the means of oppressing others, or injuring them in their honest pursuits or reputation, if they happen to hold a different faith. In all those cases, then, in which a person either makes religion a mere pretence for securing other advantages, or uses the form of faith, to which he is sincerely attached, to injure and oppress others, public sentiment at least, if not common practice, is generally disposed to pass a just sentence of condemnation.

But there are other cases, in which this practice of using religion, solely or chiefly, for gaining or securing other advantages, is rather favored than discountenanced by public opinion. To these cases and to this whole view of religion, as a means and instrument for something else, I now wish to direct your serious attention.

In an industrious and thrifty community, like ours, in which every one must work for his living and respectable standing in society, men are naturally inclined to judge of the worth of every thing, according to its fitness to procure to the possessor more or less of the necessaries and comforts of life. With regard to a thing of doubtful value, the first question is apt to be, not whether it is good or bad, but what it is good for; and if people say, that it is good for something, they commonly mean, that it can be used as an article of food, or clothing, or trade, that it is fit to procure to us some of the necessaries, comforts, or luxuries of life.

Men, who are in the habit of calculating the value

of things according to this standard of common utility, are apt to think religion, at least Christianity, a good thing, because of the obvious advantages, the security of life, property, social order, and general comfort, which are the natural consequences of the prevalence of religious principles in a community. Considerations like these have induced some political men, of distinguished talent, to promote religious instruction and the institutions of Christianity, though they were themselves unbelievers. But, as I have before observed, this way of valuing religion, not for its own intrinsic worth, but for its favorable influence upon the common interests of life, is not confined to men who are indifferent to religion itself. Many religious men seem to judge of religion and religious institutions, merely or chiefly, by their common utility. Many sentiments, which we hear or see expressed every day in conversation, or public meetings, or periodicals, however different from one another, may be reduced to this common standard of judging. This mode of considering religion, not so much for what it is in itself, as for what it serves to promote and accomplish, is strengthened in an industrious and thrifty community, like ours, by public opinion, which judges of every thing and every person by their relative usefulness.

Now, to a certain extent, this practical view of life and the interests of man and of society is just, also, with regard to religion. Godliness is, indeed, profitable to all things; as a promoter of habits of temperance and industry; as restraining the desire of

gain, as well as all other passions, within the bounds of nature and justice; as establishing and securing civil order and the rational freedom of the community. But if some one should be induced, by those considerations, to say, with a certain French philosopher, that, if there be no God, one ought to be invented on account of the eminent usefulness of religion, who is there, in this community, that would not shrink from such an insinuation as impious. For men have at last grown wise, if not virtuous enough, to see, that there is no such thing as a pious fraud, but that all fraud is impious. Still, this narrow way of calculating the value of religion, although it is shocking to us, when carried to such an extreme, may, nevertheless, exist to an undue and injurious extent, and yet be countenanced by public opinion. It is this view of religion, this habit of estimating it, merely or chiefly, on the ground of its usefulness, which I would now bring before you as an error, from which the community, of which we are members, is certainly not exempted, though it may not exist here to the same degree as in some other countries. There are countries, where religion is used to subject and enslave the souls of men to the authority of those who keep their bodies in bondage, and to satisfy their hunger after earthly comforts by large promises of happiness in the life to come. Impositions like these would, in this country, ruin the reputation and prospects of any one who should be bold enough to profess them. Still we hear sentiments expressed amongst us, which, although innocent and insignificant, when compared with such

degrading views of religion, are, nevertheless, results of the same mode of reasoning. We hear the habit of going to church recommended, because it is setting a good example to others, or because it is respectable, and, in general, promotes steady habits. In our country, one form of Christianity is considered more respectable at the South, and another at the North. Now and then we hear the Roman Catholic religion commended, because, by the authority of the priests, and the necessity of auricular confession, it secures our persons and property from the encroachments of those, who could not be kept otherwise within the bonds of order and peace. There are some classes in society, for which a religion of reason, or of love, is thought to be suitable; but there are others, for which a religion of authority and fear is considered necessary. Nay, in some works of considerable reputation, the existence of a state religion is commended, because it serves to establish the authority of government, and checks the spirit of innovation.

Established creeds are considered useful, because one alteration, in matters of faith, may lead men on to another, and we do not know where they will stop. In the expression of our religious sentiments, we must carefully consider, whether the present critical state of public opinion will bear the profession of such views. Prudence, therefore, is considered as the second, if not the very first, virtue of a Christian minister. It is not my object to swell the catalogue of things, which religion is, or may be thought to be,

good for; those, which I have mentioned, may be sufficient to indicate the spirit, the mode of reasoning, which I wish to point out as wrong.

In most of the cases which I have mentioned, the object for which religion is used or recommended is in the main desirable; and the only fault to be found with this mode of reasoning is this, that religion is considered as a mere instrument, that must be fashioned and adapted to the end which it is thought calculated to promote. Thus, going to church, or observing any of the institutions of Christianity, is indeed a salutary practice; and setting a good example to others is praiseworthy; and, generally, to do what makes a man respectable among his fellow-men is commendable; and steady habits are highly important to the individual and to society. Still, my friends, the Lord's day and other Christian institutions were surely not appointed and introduced in order to give men an opportunity of setting a good example to others, or of making themselves respectable in society, or to form steady habits, but for the single purpose of inducing men to withdraw their minds, for a season, from the common occupations, the engrossing cares and interests of the world, and to meditate on their moral and spiritual nature, their connexion with the spiritual world and the Father of spirits; — to turn their attention from temporal advantages to their eternal interests, their fearful responsibilities, their glorious hopes.

The whole notion, that a man's religious character is a part of his respectability, and that, therefore, a

man should be less respectable in one part of our country for professing a form of faith, which is thought highly of in another, — this notion, I say, though held by many persons of high standing in society, is essentially low and degrading. For a man is truly respectable, at least he can respect himself, only when he adopts and professes the religion which he conscientiously thinks to be true; and this only true ground of self-respect must necessarily be the same all over the world.

Again; to suppose that one form of faith, that a religion of reason and love, is suitable for one class in society, while it would be injurious to others; that some require a religion of fear and authority, an unquestioning reliance on the infallibility of creeds and priests, — this opinion is founded upon a mistaken view of Christianity, and a degrading idea of human nature. The religion of Jesus Christ, while it surpassed the wisdom of the wisest men of his nation and his age, was preached to, and spread by, the fishermen of Galilee. Though hidden from the wise and the prudent, it was revealed unto babes. The great doctrines of religion, the existence and paternal character of God, the immortality of the soul, the two great commandments of love to God and love to man, which are the foundation, both of our duty in this life, and of the righteous judgment which awaits us at the gates of eternity, — these great doctrines of religion are within the reach of every mind; and they are sufficient to direct our reason, and to influence our will. They are sufficient checks upon

our passions, sufficient inducements to virtue, considering that man was designed to be a free moral agent, whose character must be his own work, in order to make him responsible for it. It is true, superstition and fanaticism may occasionally impose more powerful chains upon human action; they may subject a person wholly to the authority of his priest; and if the priest or minister be disposed to promote peace and order in society, he may make his spiritual subject, not a good man, for that is beyond the power of man, but a harmless creature. But let every man judge for himself, whether it be better for the temporal and eternal interests of the individual and of society, to be ruled by the authority of any being, fallible like himself, or by the law of liberty in his own heart, with all the chances of good and evil conduct, connected with moral free agency.

It is true, also, that religion may be made a powerful support of civil government and political institutions; that the state may derive assistance from the church, and the church from the state. But experience, as well as sound philosophy, prove that it is the true interest of the state to require of its members no more nor less, than conformity to its laws, made for the security of their rights; and that it is the true interest of religion, to depend for its support and advancement, not on extraneous help, but on the internal resources of the kingdom of Christ, on the religious nature of man; its longings after light from above to dissipate the shadows of death; on the exertions of the ministers of religion, and on the constant

coöperation of the members of each religious society.

Again; if you attempt to bind down the consciences of men to an established creed, you make the living and life-giving spirit of religion a slave to the dead and deadening letter. If you oblige your minister, with anxious prudence, to consult what happens to be the sentiment of the majority of his people, if you cannot bear his holding and professing, on some subjects, opinions contrary to the popular sentiment, you degrade the office which you have conferred. You tempt him to love the favor of men better than the approbation of his conscience and his God. You deprive yourselves of the best security you can have for believing that the doctrine he teaches is really his true opinion, and not merely an accommodation to yours. The truth is, that the great object of all exercises and institutions of religion is not the security of our property, not a respectable name and standing in society, but religion itself. Religion is not meat and drink; the kingdom of God is not a tributary province of the kingdom of this world; and those, who promote it merely for the external advantages it is calculated to secure, may be prudent and even patriotic, but they are not religious men; they are not Christians in spirit and in truth.

It may be thought, by some, inexpedient to discuss and criticize the motives, from which men promote the cause of religion, if they only do actually promote it. But it is this very mode of reasoning, that would

make the profession of religious sentiments dependent on transient advantage or disadvantage, which I censure. Besides, I think the motives, from which the cause of religion is either promoted or opposed, far more important than any thing that is done, either for or against it.

For the same reason, I leave it to those, from whose mode of thinking on this subject I dissent, to show, that it is inexpedient, impolitic, to represent religion merely as a useful instrument for other purposes. It is obvious, to be sure, that, as soon as a step which we take is once known to be a measure of mere policy, it ceases to be good policy. I simply say, that this religion of prudence, of calculation, is not religion; it certainly is not the religion of Jesus Christ. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." Let religion and virtue be your first thought, your principal concern; do not consider them as secondary to any thing else; do not look upon them as means and instruments for accomplishing any other purpose, however innocent or laudable.

Religion addresses man, not as a creature of time and circumstances, but as a spiritual being. It reveals to him his connexion with the spiritual world and the Father of spirits. It bids him look upon all earthly things, upon poverty and riches, weakness and power, honor and dishonor, health and sickness, life and death, as instruments, which he may or should make use of for his eternal destiny.

But he, who would make use of religion merely as an instrument for securing adventitious advantages,

sins against the spirit of our text, and makes the kingdom of God meat and drink.

But our text teaches us not only in what the kingdom of God does not consist; it reveals to us its own true nature. The kingdom of God consists in righteousness, or the performance of all the duties we owe to our fellow-men. It consists in peace, that inward peace, which results from the control of our own passions. It consists in joy, joy in the Holy Spirit, that speaks to us, through the works of God, by the mouth of Jesus, and by that still small voice, which the righteous man, the man who is at peace with his own heart, hears in sorrow and in joy, in the noise and bustle of business, as well as at the domestic fireside, and where no one sees him but God, in the silence of his heart.

I do not wish, that religion should be considered without any reference to our own happiness; but I would have it considered as a source of happiness, independent of all the secondary advantages which may be derived from it. Seek ye, first, the kingdom of God, says Jesus, and all these things, all other advantages shall be added to you. And we may go further, and say, in the spirit of the Gospel, that, even though these other advantages and enjoyments should not be added to us in this life, religion itself, the kingdom of God within us, the assurance that we are immortal beings, capable of securing to ourselves by our own actions, a life of happiness without end; this one assurance outweighs the value of all earthly possessions and prospects by its incalculable glory.

My friends, are there among us, in the outward and inward state of society, certain signs and proofs, that the kingdom of God, of which Jesus Christ said, that it was nigh at hand, has actually come? Jesus says, the kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. Is there, among us, that righteousness, which consists in asserting and maintaining, not our own rights only, but the rights of all men? The love of liberty, which we profess, is it that true, elevated, and enlarged feeling, which would impart the blessings of freedom to all whom God created in his own image; or is it a selfish passion, that prompts us to claim these privileges only for ourselves? Having "looked into the perfect law of liberty," can it be said of us, that we have continued therein?

Is there, in the state of society among us, that true peace, which arises from the conviction, that the rights, the just claims of all, are respected? "Blessed are the peacemakers," says Jesus; but the work of the peacemaker, my friends, begins in his own bosom. The hostile principles in society will never be overcome, while we harbour the enemy in our own hearts. Finally, is there, in our souls, that holy joy, which makes all darkness to shine as the perfect day, — the inward felicity of a soul at peace with herself, and rejoicing against the judgment day?

Let each one put these questions to his own heart, and answer them to himself, remembering, that he shall have to answer the same at the judgment-seat of God.

SERMON XXII.

1 Thessalonians v. 17.

"Pray without ceasing."

What is prayer? Is it the monotonous muttering of solemn sounds? Is it the fingering of the beads of a rosary? Or is it an elaborate composition of pertinent and needful petitions, skilfully strung together for what is called a judicious and appropriate prayer? Is this prayer? As well might you say, that music consists in beating time, or poetry in measured lines with jingling endings. What is prayer? A poet says,

> "Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
> Uttered or unexpressed;
> The motion of a hidden fire,
> That trembles in the breast."

These words of the poet seem to me to reveal the very soul of prayer. To pray is to desire, to long, to stretch forth every power of the soul after the one thing needful to an immortal spirit, even a free access, an intimate union, an active intercourse, with the Father of spirits. "My soul," says the Psalmist, "thirsteth for God, for the living God." This thirst after the living waters that flow for ever

at the right hand of God, this thirst of the soul is prayer. "Prayer," says the pious Fenelon, "is a simple movement of the heart towards its Creator. Ever desire to approach your Creator, and you will never cease to pray."

Desire is the permanent essence, the particular requests or petitions are only the accidental and temporary directions or applications of prayer. If it were not so, the monition of the Apostle, "Pray without ceasing," would imply a practical impossibility. If prayer consisted in petition, the time, which was given us for action, for constant doing, would be consumed in ceaseless praying. But there is a still greater objection to this view of prayer, which considers the petitions, the actual requests, as more important than the inward desire, the devout aspiration, which prompts them. This view of prayer, as a mere collection of petitions, contains a fearful temptation to infidelity, to a decided unbelief in the superintending providence of God. The temptation I speak of is one which comes to the child on his very entrance upon a course of religious life; and it is those in particular, to whom God has committed or who have taken upon themselves the care of infant souls, whom I wish to apprize of this moral danger. My friends, if you desire, that religion should be to your children, not merely a sacred prejudice, that fears to be profaned by being put to the test of experience; if you wish, that religion should be to them a reality, safely established in the understanding heart, beware, lest you lead them into temptation by

the manner in which you teach them how to pray. If you lay too much stress upon the petitions of the child, be they ever so proper and simple, be they no other than those contained in the Lord's prayer, you induce the child to believe, that God will grant him the things he asks, because he asks them. But a short experience is sufficient to teach the child, that some of his requests, however reasonable and needful, and however fervently urged, are not granted. Every human being has to learn, earlier or later, that the cries of the destitute, the prayers of honest industry, and the pleadings of innocence, are sometimes the harbingers of utter disappointment and dismay. It is then, that the tempter, the enemy of our peace, comes to us with the fearful question, "Where now is thy God?" and the soul is stirred up by secret murmurings and painful upbraidings, which, if they were to find utterance, would break forth in the exclamation, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

It is true, we generally endeavour to guard against this temptation to skepticism, arising from the apparent uselessness of our prayers, by qualifying all our petitions by the salutary condition, "not as I will, but as thou wilt"; "thy will, not mine, be done." But even this belief, that our prayers will be granted, provided they be consistent with the will of God, is not sufficient to convince us, that those things, which come to pass in conformity with our petitions, would not have occurred without them. The experience of success, unexpected, and unprayed for, as well as the disappointment of our reasonable hopes

and devout aspirations, tempts us to doubt the efficacy of prayer; nay, the existence of a God "that heareth prayer."

These doubts disturb the mind, not only of the man who would walk by sight rather than by faith, but of the little child, who begins to doubt as soon as he begins to think, and whose self-taught questionings might puzzle many a schoolman.

I know these doubts may be smothered, for some time, by imposing names and confident assertions. But he, who seeks true peace of mind and quiet self-possession, must not, like a despotic ruler, impose silence on every rebellious thought, and suppress the bold questionings of unsatisfied reason; he must grant a fair and full hearing to the pleadings of faith and of skepticism, and then "even of himself he must judge what is right."

With regard to the efficacy of prayer, we know, that there are many cases, recorded in Scripture, in which the petition, the special request, of the suppliant heart brought down the desired good, be it rain or sunshine, deliverance to the captive, health to the sick, life to the dead. And every one, in examining the history of his own life, may find evidences, which are sufficient, at least to himself, that there were times or moments, when, sinking in the troubled waters of life, and lifting up his hands in prayer, he felt himself supported and saved by an invisible arm. But in the ordinary course of events, every one is left to the exercise of his own faculties, and the favorable or adverse circumstances, from which he is to

derive wisdom and strength, or suffer the consequences of not doing justice to his opportunities. In the infinite and incalculable variety and change of circumstances, of merited and unmerited success and disappointment, which enter into the plan of Providence, laid out for our improvement throughout eternity, we have no right to expect, that our supplications or petitions will arrest or modify the ordinary course of events. It is enough for us to know, that, if we do our present duty, our eternal interests are safe in the hand of him, whose will we obey. To teach men, that the success of their undertakings will depend on their petitions, rather than on their exertions, is tempting them to infidelity. But what then? Shall we give up all prayer, except in those cases which seem to justify a special interposition of Providence? By no means. All I want given up is an erroneous and superstitious view of prayer, which undermines the faith in its efficacy and use. I maintain, that prayer is indispensable to the moral progress of man, and that every true prayer is heard and fulfilled.

God has laid out for every human being an endless course of progressive excellence and happiness. All, indeed, have not the same opportunities and advantages. It is not granted to all to inhabit the high places, and move in the high walks of life; but there is no path of duty, be it ever so lowly, that does not lead to the great end of our being; there is no situation on earth that does not afford a prospect of heaven. However finite, however confined his sphere of existence, it is in the power of every one to en-

large it indefinitely, even in proportion to the expansion of his own intellectual and moral attainments. Though shut out from the society of his more fortunate fellow-men, he has free access to, he can commune with, the infinite Mind. But this glorious prospect is of no avail, no degree of excellence can be reached, all approach to God is impossible, without an intense and ever-growing desire, a holy impulse, a divine ambition, prompting us to look upon our highest attainments as childish things to be put away, and to strive to attain to the nature of perfect men. Now this desire of endless progress, this longing and striving to grow more and more into the divine likeness, and commune more freely and intimately with the divine Spirit, — this movement of the heart towards its Creator is prayer.

It is by taking this view of prayer, that the admonition of the Apostle, "Pray without ceasing," appears practicable; and in this way I may be able to justify the assertion, that prayer is indispensable to the moral progress of man, and that every true prayer is fulfilled. "Pray without ceasing," that is, cherish and cultivate the spirit of devotion, without which nothing truly good and perfect has ever been accomplished, from the simplest handiwork even to the highest productions of science, art, and genius; — the spirit of devotion, which prompts us to every noble effort, and enables us to make every sacrifice, to count not even our lives dear to ourselves, so that we may finish our course with joy. It is the spirit of prayer, of self-sacrificing devotion, which prompts

us to a course of life, in which we find ourselves supported, at every step, by him who guides the stars in their appointed spheres, and without whose will not a sparrow falleth to the ground. That deep, inward satisfaction, that feeling of perfect safety, and reliance on divine assistance, which attends every act of true devotion to duty, is it not the most perfect fulfilment of our prayer? Jesus says, if ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. They who abide in the Son of God, they who desire nothing more, and therefore ask and pray for nothing else, than to be able to see and to do the will of God, cannot fail to find, in every advancing step they are enabled to take in the path of duty, and wisdom, and glory, a fulfilment of their devout aspirations. Do not think, says Fenelon, "that it is necessary to pronounce many words. To pray is to say, Let thy will be done; it is to form a good purpose; it is to raise your heart to God; it is to lament your weakness; it is to sigh at the recollection of your frequent disobedience. This prayer demands neither method, nor science, nor reasoning; it is not necessary to quit one's employment; it is a simple movement of the heart towards its Creator. The best of all prayer is to act with a pure intention, and with a continual reference to the will of God. Hence it depends on ourselves, whether our prayers be efficacious. It is not by a miracle, but by a change of heart, that we are benefited by a spirit of submission."

Words, without the life-giving spirit of prayer, are

of no use; nay, they are worse than nothing, inasmuch as they delude the mind with a belief that we are actually praying, while we are only reciting and acting a part. But, then, where the spirit of prayer is, there the sentiment itself is strengthened by earnest and repeated expressions of it. The best expressions of a prayerful mind are just and generous actions. Still, I would not, on this account, undervalue the peculiar language of prayer, the humble entreaty, the heart-felt petition, nay, the solemn tones, the closed or uplifted eye, the folded hands, and the bended knee.

Every thing in this case depends, of course, on the fact, whether these forms are the real and natural expression of sentiment, or merely assumed attitudes. The question is, whether the bended knee is to us a natural expression of humility; whether the folding of our hands is, in truth, only the outward manifestation of what is going on within us, a visible emblem of pious resignation. The question is, whether it is the desire to shut out all distracting impressions from without, which closes these eyes, or a simultaneous rising of the spirit, which raises them to heaven. The question is, whether these low tones really come forth from the depths of the heart, and whether these petitions and entreaties are the promptings and outpourings of a help-seeking spirit, that is, at the same time, determined, to the utmost of its power, to help itself. It would be absurd to assert, that God could not be worshipped as acceptably in one attitude as in another.

But the form of expression, which the religious sentiment creates for itself, whatever it be, becomes a powerful instrument of devotion, by calling forth and strengthening the principle, of which it is the offspring.

"Pray without ceasing," is a monition equally addressed to all men in all situations. The germ of devotion will grow freely in every heart; but, according to the peculiar capacity of the soil, it may require a different kind of culture in different individuals. Many persons find themselves benefited by setting apart certain portions of the day for religious service. At the break of day they seek a spiritual preparation for its various duties in family prayers; and when night comes on, before they close their eyes in sleep, they seek spiritual rest in commending themselves to Him, who never slumbereth or sleepeth. Many, or most persons are accustomed to ask a blessing before their meals, remembering Him, who is the Giver and Supporter of life. Others think, that the uniform recurrence of stated seasons of prayer impairs the freshness, the interest, the quickening power of devotional exercises, which should be the unbidden and unpremeditated outpourings of a prayerful spirit. It is not mine to judge of what others may think best for their own spiritual improvement. Let every one be persuaded in his own mind; and then, with fearless independence, mingled with a tender regard for the feelings of others, let him follow the plan he has laid out for his religious progress. Let me see the genuine fruits of prayer, and I care not when, or how the seed was sown. If the soul, the inner man, is constantly open to the reception of spiritual truth;

if the events of life do not fail to impress him with the design of Providence, and prompt him to profit by the divine teachings of experience; if every occasion, that calls either for action or sacrifice, finds him ready to do or to suffer for conscience' sake, — I know, although no voice from within has ever made known to me the condition of that man's mind, — I know, that his soul is a house of prayer. In some men, holy desires become actions before they have found vent in words.

I would, that all men should pray, even without ceasing. But I would not enjoin it upon them as a bounden duty.

Prayer is a natural, nay, a necessary movement of the heart, not an act of the will. It is our duty, and it depends on our own will, to keep the spirit free from the debasing influence of selfish passions; and be assured, as soon as the moral chains fall off, the spirit, of its own accord, will arise, and go to the Father of spirits. In the bustle of business, the heart will ascend to him, whose eye is still upon us. The child, in his weakness, the parent, in his tender anxiety, the patriot, in his devoted love for his country, the citizen of the world, who sees in all men his brethren, will never cease to pray to him, who is not far from any one of us.

Prayer will arise from the worshipping assembly, from the domestic altar. Prayer will ascend from the individual mind, and realize the highest anticipations of human bliss, even the life of the soul in God, and the life of God in the soul.

SERMON XXIII.

JOHN XIV. 11.

"Believe me, that I am in the Father, and the Father in me; or else believe me for the very works' sake."

It is not uncommon, among Christians, to look upon the miracles of Jesus as mere displays of divine power, to corroborate the divine origin of his doctrine. With such a view of the miracles, the admonition of Jesus to Philip, to believe his doctrine, if not on internal evidence, at least on account of the signs and wonders by which it was confirmed, seems hardly compatible with the spirit of the Gospel, which demands not a blind, but a rational and living faith. But those, who are not satisfied with a superficial view, but earnestly strive to enter into the deep things of Scripture, will find, that there is not one of the miracles recorded in the Gospel, that can justly be considered as a mere exhibition of divine power; they will find, that the miracles are lessons and examples, as well as external evidences of the truth of the doctrines of Christ. With this view of the miracles, as examples and lessons, it is easy to see the perfect propriety of the direction, which Jesus gave to Philip, to believe him for the very works' sake.

Jesus did not intend to turn his mind from the substance of his doctrine to the external signs by which it was accompanied; he only pointed out to him the way, in which a competent knowledge of the truth was most likely to be attained by a mind like that of Philip, who shows, in this very conversation, that he was an uneducated man, and, as such, more inclined and apt to learn from facts and examples, than from mere words, however affecting and convincing.

I have said, in the second place, that the miracles were not merely displays of the supernatural power, intended to corroborate the mission of the divine Teacher, but that they were themselves manifestations of those highest truths which he was sent to reveal. It was the most obvious design of the miracles to manifest the goodness of God; most of them being the means of restoring the sick to life, the child to his disconsolate parent, the brother to his bereaved sisters. To this most obvious tendency of the miracles to display the goodness of God towards man, which has been frequently mentioned, I will add some other considerations, which make me look upon the miracles as manifestations of the same truths, which are laid down in the Gospel; as manifestations of the character and government of God, and of the duty and destiny of man. If some of the observations, which I am going to make, should appear novel and questionable to some of my hearers, I wish them to be considered as individual opinions, presented to those who are able to judge of themselves what is right, and who will not judge before they have calmly and accurately weighed the argument.

In the first place, then, I will remark, it is this view of the miracles, not as mere displays of superhuman power, but as lessons and examples, which I now wish to bring before you. I shall endeavour to show, that the supernatural agency of God, displayed in the miracles, has thrown upon the common course of events a light, which was but faintly perceived by the loftiest aspirations of philosophy. Even independent of the words which they were intended to corroborate, they contain, in themselves, a revelation of the nature, the duty, and the destiny of man.

It is natural, indeed, to infer, from the faculties with which man is endowed, and from the circumstances under which he is placed, from all the means of subsistence, improvement, and happiness, which are put within his reach, — it is natural, I say, to infer from all this, that man is not a creature of blind chance, but of a kind and provident Creator. But, on the other hand, when we consider how much the destiny of man, his subsistence, his improvement, and his happiness depend on accidental circumstances and events, on the place and time of his birth, on his parents, his instructors, on the civil and religious condition of the community to which he belongs, — we are tempted to doubt, whether that provident power, which has made the earth a fit dwellingplace for man, extends and continues its guardian care to every human being, or whether the same power, that provides for the existence of the race, does not abandon the individual to the accidental influences of nature and society, favorable and unfavorable. He may

be born an idiot, or, though endowed with the noblest powers of body and mind, they may be stinted by his first education, or in after life; and sickness, poverty, ignorance, or vice, may counteract and pervert all the provisions of nature for the elevation and happiness of an individual.

It is when we are thus perplexed by the consideration of the influence of evil, and, still more, of chance in this world, that the fool, who says in his heart, "there is no God," can touch and trouble ours by the question, "Where is thy God?" The lively impression of many facts, apparently at war with our faith in a kind Providence, tempts us to unbelief, to a daring attempt to cut the intricate knot of human existence by a direct denial, instead of trying to disentangle it by following up the innumerable threads and mysterious windings to their simple beginning. We lose sight of the end, while we gaze at the infinite variety of means employed by the indirect agency of God, which, from apparent or transient evil, produces final, substantial good. But, when the failure of our best hopes in this world threatens to unsettle our filial trust in God, the contemplation of his direct agency, displayed in the miracles, may allay our rising fears, and aid our reason in searching, more diligently and deeply, after a more satisfactory philosophy of nature and of man. I say, that the direct agency of God, in the miracles of Jesus Christ, assists our reason in endeavouring to understand and to justify the ways of God to man in the natural course of events. Let us look at some

of the miracles, recorded in the Gospel, in this general point of view.

The history of all nations informs us of what we have opportunity to ascertain, even without looking beyond our own country and age, that the mass of men are considered, by many of their fellow-men, as a species of animals, of which the individuals derive their sole or chief value, not from their common nature and destiny, not even from their own merit, but from circumstances, from wealth, or from the artificial distinctions of society. The heir apparent to a throne is hailed by millions of men, whom centuries of servitude have rendered unmindful of the glorious inheritance to which God himself has called each one of them; while the child of a poor man comes into this world, proscribed beforehand by the heartless speculations of political economists as a new impost on established wealth, and deserted by the powerful favorites of fortune, the gods of this earth, to receive his first education from poverty, ignorance, and vice. Does this striking difference, which society has made between the offspring of affluence and of poverty, lead you to doubt the common, eternal destiny of man? Look upon the first miracle on the records of Christianity, the birth of the Saviour. He, who came into this world in fulfilment of ancient prophecy, he, who though born of a woman, called no one his father on earth, he, the Son of God, was pleased to call himself the Son of man, as if to teach us, that we, though descended from human parents, ought not to forget, that the Father of these parents is no other

than the Father of Jesus Christ; and that though our birth was not foretold by prophecy, yet our destination for freedom and immortality was foreknown and fore-ordained in the counsels of eternity. Thus, the miraculous birth of the Saviour teaches me to look upon the birth of every child as a miracle. It teaches me, that every man or woman, that is born into this world, is a child of God, claiming, in virtue of his divine birthright, an equal share in all the means of improvement and happiness which this world affords, and looking out upon an endless prospect beyond; possessed of powers which defy calculation, and an innate, prophetic desire to go on from strength to strength, and from glory to glory.

Thus, the miraculous birth of the Saviour leads the reflecting mind to the true philosophy of human nature, revealing both the origin and the destiny of man. In the same manner, when the partial distribution of good and evil, of wealth and poverty, in this world, would cause us to doubt the even-handed justice and universal benevolence of God; when you see, how those, who abound in means of happiness, in the necessaries and comforts of life, are permitted to withhold them from their suffering fellow-men, prompted either by a senseless love of waste, or a heartless desire of accumulation, — reflect and ask yourselves if this be the conduct enjoined by the example of him, who used the power, given him by God, to feed a starving multitude in the desert place, and to fill the cup of innocent, earthly joy for the wedding-guests at Cana. Let us learn, from these

miraculous displays of overflowing kindness, the true philosophy of riches. Let us not charge the meanness or prodigality of some, and the distress of others, upon him who has provided for all his children wisely and liberally, and committed to them the dispensation of his blessings; but let those, who abound in those things, from the want of which the large majority of men are suffering, remember, that the seeds of content and gladness are in their hands, and that the flourishing or desolate fields around them will bear testimony of their wise industry, or criminal neglect, when the Lord of the harvest shall come to settle with his laborers, and reward each one according to his deserts.

In the same way, when I see some men highly instructed and cultivated, while thousands and millions grow up in savage ignorance; instead of charging the Father of light with partiality in the distribution of it, I look upon the Preacher of the mount, sent by God to instruct all men, according to their several capacities, in those truths which are equally beneficial to all. His example reminds me, that God has implanted in all men the desire of imparting, as well as of acquiring knowledge, and that this pure desire is restrained or adulterated by lower appetites, or by institutions of society, calculated to obstruct the diffusion of light. The example of the Teacher from heaven shows me, that every man has a divine mission, to bring all the means of knowledge, which he can procure, within the reach of all; that the world is designed to be a school of mutual instruction; and, as

all departments of knowledge are so connected with each other, that the highest cannot be reached with safety, without a firm foothold on the lower branches, we see, that he, who procures to a child instruction in the rudiments of knowledge, or to a young man the advantages of a liberal education, is fulfilling a part of his heavenly mission. He is doing something toward paying off the common debt, which every generation of men owes to every succeeding generation; he is a follower of his Saviour, a fellow-worker with him in redeeming the world from the bondage of ignorance, and in shedding abroad the light of life, without which nature remains a sealed book, and Scripture becomes a dead letter.

As the divine Teacher, by his example, has shown us our duties toward the ignorant, so he, the heavenly physician, has taught us our duties toward the sick. His intercourse with the sick and the afflicted taught his proud and superstitious countrymen not to look up to the prosperous, as the favorites of God, nor down upon the afflicted, as the objects of divine displeasure; he sought those who stood in need of the physician, and pronounced his blessing "upon them that mourn." Those, whom the heartless superstition of men had given up, and excluded from the reach of human sympathy, the victims of severe diseases of the mind, experienced the special kindness of Jesus. He restored the deranged to mental health, to show us, that the divine spark, in the mind of man, however obscured for a time, is never wholly extinct. He treated them with signal kindness, in order to

show us their sacred claim upon our brotherly sympathy and aid.

He showed the same benevolence, he taught us the same lesson, by his conduct toward those who were suffering under infectious disease, and, in consequence of it, under the still more severe affliction of being shut out from all intercourse with their fellow-men. Jesus not only relieved the sufferers, but, by the manner in which he relieved them, he taught us, not only to administer the healing draught to those who are afflicted, but to add the balm of tender sympathy and brotherly love. Jesus not only healed the leper, but he touched him, that all might learn, from his example, not to shun, with excessive fear and fastidious disgust, the sight of human distress, or contact with human misery.

Jesus rose from the dead to teach us, by his own example, the immortality of our souls. Nay, in order to show us, that not only he, the Son of man, who had thrown off his mortal nature long before his body was consigned to the grave, but that every human being should rise, and bring with him, into another life, the same faculties, the same affections, the same character, and the full consciousness, that he is still essentially the same being, — *Jesus raised the dead.* That our faith might assume the strength of vision, he introduced immortality into mortal life. And, as if to assure us more especially, that the restoration of life would be a resurrection of our deepest and best affections, Jesus used his quickening and life-giving power, in order to restore a daughter to her afflicted parents; an only

son to his widowed mother; a brother to his weeping sisters.

Thus we see, in the miracles of Jesus, when we faithfully examine their nature and design, not merely the external signs and evidences, the mere credentials of his mission; we look upon them as demonstrations of the principles which he taught, as parts of his doctrine. The miraculous birth of him, who, though born a mortal man, was the Son of the living God, teaches us to trace the origin of every human being to the Father of Jesus Christ and our Father, and thence to infer his sublime destiny for godlike perfection. The bread, provided for a starving multitude in the desert, reveals the design of the Creator, in furnishing every part of the earth with means of human comfort and enjoyment; and the words, which he, at that time spoke to his disciples, "Give ye them to eat," are addressed to all men, bidding them to go forth as the Apostles of divine love, and minister to those, whom the imperfect distribution of the means of happiness in this world has left unprovided. The example of him, who came furnished with celestial wisdom, and revealed it unto babes, teaches us, that the light of truth, whether human or divine, is designed, by the Father of light, to shine upon every human being. The use he made of supernatural powers, to heal the sick and to raise the dead, should induce us to employ all natural means to allay burning pain, and to revive dying hope. And though no human remedy may be found to restore the sufferer, yet we may feel, that the healing and saving power of

God, which was once committed to Jesus, is never far from any one of his children, and we are taught to look upon death itself, the consummation of disease, as the only infallible restorative to health and life without end.

Thus, the miracles of Jesus, in which the design of Providence is so clearly set forth, may teach us to read the more mysterious handwriting of God, in the operations of nature and the common course of events. May the example of him, who received his human existence by a miracle, and used the supernatural power and knowledge intrusted to him, to remind men of their divine origin and heavenly mission, to instruct the ignorant, to heal the sick, to raise the dead, — may the example of Jesus Christ teach us the true use of the gifts of nature, of all the means of improvement and happiness we possess! May it induce us to aspire after a more intimate union with God, by a more faithful imitation of him who was the image of his Father; so that our very works may bear witness, that we are in God, and God in us.

SERMON XXIV.*

PROVERBS XVII. 17.

"A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity."

THE text describes the character of a true friend; and I have chosen it as a guide, for the purpose of investigating with you the nature and the duties of friendship.

There is no one present, I trust, whose moral vision is so dull or so perverted as not to distinguish between friendship and its counterfeit, that mercenary sentiment, I mean, which is referred to in other passages of the book of Proverbs, where we are told that "wealth maketh friends," and that "every man is a friend to him that giveth gifts." It is the existence and prevalence of that mercenary disposition, which forms the peculiar trial of those who are able and willing to give; inasmuch as they find it difficult to discover, whether, among the many who seek their favor and extol their bounty, there is one who loves the giver better than his gifts, — "a friend that loveth at all times; a brother born for adversity." Proverbial sayings record the testimony of experience, and common sense points out the distinction between a fair-

* From an unfinished manuscript. The conclusion is wanting.

weather friend and a friend in need, between a friend in words and a friend in acts. Among all the favors that the most bountiful friend may bestow, there is no gift so rich as that of his friendship. Where the spirit of love is, burdens become benefits; but where that is wanting, benefits become burdens.

Nay, it is said in opposition to the sentiment of the world, according to which wealth maketh friends, that there is greater blessedness in giving than in receiving. This rule is true among strangers; but it does not apply to friends. For there is, or may be, as much magnanimity in receiving as in bestowing benefits; and, if they be expressions of friendship, services, gifts, and sacrifices are precious alike to the giver and the receiver. Travellers in the East have said that when the sun rises on Mount Sinai, it is beautiful to see its shadow resting on the opposite heights of Horeb, but when the sun goes down, it is equally beautiful to trace on the majestic sides of Mount Sinai the brother form of Horeb.

Among all the examples recorded in history, there is none in which the character of true friendship is more strikingly set forth, than in the beautiful and affecting story of the heroic son of the king of Israel and the shepherd's son of Bethlehem. Their friendship began at the time when David, having slain Goliah, was brought before Saul, who inquired of him whose son he was. When the lad had disclosed his humble origin, we read that "the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul." The whole history

of the fearful trials, dangers, and temptations to which their friendship was subjected, proved the greatness of their love, and the sacredness of that covenant of heart, which bound them to one another. Jonathan heard the intimation of his father, "As long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground, thou shalt not be established, nor thy kingdom." What was the prospect that his own greatness would be endangered by that of David; what was his father's anger, which would have destroyed both David and himself; what was it all, when set against the friendship of him whom Jonathan "loved as he loved his own soul"? At the risk of his own life, he sought his friend in secret, and warned him against his father's anger; and "they kissed one another and wept one with another." "Fear not," said he to his friend, "for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee; and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee." And they renewed their covenant before God. Was not this a living illustration of our text, "A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity"?

A similar proof of disinterested friendship we find in John the Baptist, in those lofty expressions of joy at the sight of Jesus, though he knew that as he, who was the light of life, had entered the world, the borrowed light of those who went before him must wax dim. "Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. He that has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth

him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice; this my joy is fulfilled. He must increase, and I must decrease." Is this sentiment of disinterested love, as we see it displayed in John the Baptist, and in the friend of David, is it only the fruit of a cultivated mind and a matured character? I knew two little children, both very sick, lying in the same room, and eagerly asking for something to drink to allay their feverish thirst. The anxious mother, fearing that a compliance with their request might hurt the little ones, refused their prayer; till at last, by the physician's advice, the object of their eager entreaty, the cup of cold water, was handed to the youngest and sickest of the children. "Thank you, dear mother," said the little girl, "but first give it to Willie!" That power within, which enabled a little sick child to restrain the fierce cravings of a fever which no medical skill could arrest, was it a whim of the moment, or the mechanical repetition of a well-learned lesson of politeness, — or was it the same spirit that enabled the Saviour on the cross to fix his agonized attention upon those who stood at its foot; and instead of seeking relief for himself in death, and in commending his spirit to God, to exact from shrinking nature a last service, to establish a filial and maternal union between his mother and the disciple whom Jesus loved. Enough has been said of the character of friendship. Let us now consider some of its chief duties.

The first duty of friendship is that which constitutes also one of the prime qualities of the diamond. I

mean not its solidity, nor its brilliancy, but its perfect transparency. Thus the first duty of friendship is transparency, that is, truth, unvarnished, uncompromising, undaunted truth. It requires courage to speak unwelcome truth to our enemies; but a much higher courage is required for speaking truth, painful truth, to our friends. Yet the first proof of a true friend, of one that loveth at all times, is this, that he speaks the truth at all times.

It is a true saying, that "faithful are the wounds of a friend," the wounds made by a faithful surgeon, to remove the latent poison that is corroding the character. "Bear and forbear" is indeed an excellent maxim to restrain the complaints and upbraidings of wounded self-love; but the maxim was certainly not intended to induce us to suffer our brother to sin without reproof. It is true, where there is a reasonable hope, that the mind which has lost its balance will ere long recover it by its own effort, it is kinder as well as wiser to withhold than to lend unnecessary help. It is true also, that while passion speaks so strong and loud that reason would not find a hearing, it is the part of a wise friend to wait in silence, hoping that conscience will awake at length, and command the storm to be still. But if the watchman within the gates should sleep on his post, the sentinel without betrays his trust if he too keeps his peace, or if he cries peace when there is no peace. I am aware of the danger connected with such unlimited freedom of mutual reproof. I am aware of the inconsiderate haste of human passion, and of the artful

mimickry of self-love, which would lead us to mistake the fire of indignation, excited by the faults of others, for the generous kindling of the love of truth and justice, when it is in reality the effect of secret resentment, or of a censorious temper, or of overweening, officious vanity. These dangers, together with the love of ease and the fear of giving pain, have induced some persons who live in the closest intimacy to give up altogether the great christian duty of mutual reproof. They keep up a kind of artificial credit system, where all is fair and satisfactory on the outside, but the continuation of which requires that neither of the parties should ever know, or inquire, whether this promising appearance be indeed the representative of hidden treasures of love, or the miserable attempt at hiding, under the smiles of complacency, a bankrupt heart. Surely there is less of misery and real danger in the storms of passion than in the dead calm of a mutual, heartless complacency.

Let the truth be spoken in love, — but rather let it burst forth in anger, than be stifled by fear and base deceit.

I say, then, the first duty of friendship consists in trying to see our friends as they are, and to appear to them as we are. The portrait painter who would seize the real features of the human countenance, and transfer them faithfully to the canvass, chooses the calm light of a northern aspect. And he who would see clearly what he loves most fervently, and wishes to possess himself of a correct and indelible likeness of the real object of his affection, must choose the calm

northern aspect of truth in which to study the inward countenance of his friend.

The second great duty of friendship is faith, that is, constancy in our own attachments, and trust in the constancy of our friend.

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SERMON XXV.

PHILIPPIANS IV. 8.

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

I INTEND, in this discourse, to speak of some of those moral graces, which are enumerated in my text, with particular reference to the duties of justice and kindness; and I shall mention some offences, which seem to be opposed more to the spirit than to the letter of these duties, and are therefore less frequently noticed, and made the subject of moral reformation.

Justice is that fundamental virtue, without which men cannot exist together in society. It consists, chiefly, in the exercise of our rights and duties as men and as citizens. But the spirit of justice is not confined to the exercise of our social privileges and obligations. It was justice, true Christian justice, which pronounced the widow's mite a far richer gift than all the offerings of the rich men. It was justice that decided between the boasting righteousness of the Pharisee, and the humble penitence of the Publican. It was the voice of justice that called little children

to the arms of their Saviour, and acknowledged them heirs of heaven; and it was the spirit of justice which said of the woman who poured the precious ointment upon the Prince of Peace, that wheresoever his gospel was preached in the whole world, the deed of that woman also should be told for a memorial of her.

When we think of this tender and religious respect for the rights of others, and feel constrained to acknowledge it as the only true standard of perfect justice, how does our own conduct appear in comparison with Gospel morality? Is it generally understood amongst us that there are rights, precious and sacred rights, which the law of the State does not and cannot protect, which must remain intrusted to the good faith of those who cannot be forced to respect them? There are, in the first place, cases in which the law is not sufficient to protect the injured man against the evil consequences of enforcing his just claim. If a person spends his income and substance, either in luxurious living or extravagant charity, and neglects to provide for his poor relations, or to pay his just debts, what protection does the law afford to the poor relatives, and to the suffering creditor? You may say that the creditor at least may recover his own. But suppose that this poor creditor depends, for himself, and his family, on the patronage of his rich and powerful customer. In this case, and, unfortunately, the case is not merely an imaginary one, he sees, in the aid which the law affords to him, nothing but the accomplishment of his ruin. In such and similar cases there is no other remedy than that the

moral sentiment of the community should make itself known and felt, by branding with disgrace those acts of injustice which the arm of the law cannot reach; and that the Christian pulpit, instead of countenancing, should protest against the gifts of an extravagant charity and a religious zeal, which would feed the altar of God with the fragments of domestic happiness. If a man thinks himself justified in violating the just claims of those whom Providence has assigned to his care, under the plea of religious zeal, and if this plea be supported by the ministers of Christ, are they not thus abetting the doctrine of the Scribes and Pharisees, that a man may with impunity dishonor his father and his mother, if the gift by which they might have been profited, be offered to Almighty God; to that God who will have mercy and not sacrifice?

I have said that there are rights which the law does not and cannot protect. I do not speak of possessions which we can lay our hands upon; I speak of things unseen, but real; of properties and merits of the mind and the heart, which have a just claim to our respect. Can it be said of the present state of society, that justice is done to the rights of the mind and the heart, to exalted virtue, to promising talents and noble attainments? Honor to whom honor is due. This precept all are eager to fulfil, when the tribute of respect they pay to the prominent merit of others is likely to reflect honor upon themselves. But when the choice and precious plant happens to spring up on a barren spot, where it is suffered to linger unnoticed and uncared for by the world, while even the windows

of heaven seem to be shut up against it; where is the fostering hand that will save the tender plant of the mind from a fatal obscurity, and transplant it to a genial soil? Even among those who will extend a helping hand to suffering merit, how few are there who will do it with that true humility, that tender respect, which is due to the most precious thing on earth, to mental and moral excellence.

There exists among men a generosity, falsely so called, which would allow to no one any rights except they be received as favors. This patronizing condescension, this injustice in the disguise of kindness, is far less to be desired for all the honey of its good graces, than to be dreaded for its sting and its poison.

There are other claims besides those of unprotected and unpretending merit, which the spirit of justice bids us respect in every human being. That law of justice, whose spirit is heavenly love, forbids us to intrude our private cares and troubles upon those to whom life presents its sunny side, or to disturb, by our exulting mirth, the sacred silence of devoted sorrow. Every soul that has experienced the various trials, the joys and troubles, the hopes and disappointments of life, becomes a repository of feelings, recollections, and anticipations, which shrink from the intrusive eye of idle curiosity; and it is sacrilege to break in upon the sanctuary of the soul. Duty commands us to respect the private sentiments of others, with regard to their friends, their family, their country, and their religion, so far as they do not arrogantly intrude them upon others. Whenever the cause of truth calls us to

defend our own sentiments, and to expose what we think erroneous in others, it should be done with that candor and humility which is the infallible test of a friend of truth, who never forgets that the error may be on his side, as well as on that of his dissenting brethren.

My friends, in our warm disputes about religion, let us never forget that errors are often the intimate companions of pure and holy feelings. Many persons are brought up in errors, rendered dear to them by those friends who lived and died in them, and left them as a sacred inheritance to their children. These errors ought indeed to be done away;—but by a tender and holy hand. The spirit of true religion is often embodied in prejudice, and says to the presumptuous reformer, who approaches it with an unsparing hand, "Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended" to that state of light in which I can exist without this perishable body.

I have mentioned some of those moral graces which are the accomplishments of the just, and have pointed out some offences against a high and delicate sense of justice.

I now wish to speak in the same manner of the kindred duty of kindness; but am obliged to confine my remarks at present to a transient recognition of the interesting truths connected with this subject. Justice consists in not infringing the rights, the property, and the feelings of other men; kindness consists in benefiting others and ministering to their spiritual wants. Justice puts a restraint upon our feelings and actions,

that they may not injure our neighbour ; kindness bids them overflow to his benefit. There are several virtues and graces, such as courtesy, charity, and mercy, which are comprehended under the family name of kindness.

In the first place, I would repeat the remark already made, that kindness, charity, or mercy can never be a substitute for justice.

No favor, however great, is an equivalent for injured right. No person, who is disposed to be truly just and kind towards others, will bestow upon them as a favor, what they can claim as a right ; and no one, without being unjust to himself, can accept or feel obliged by such a degrading liberality.

In the second place, kindness should have only one motive ; it should flow from free and disinterested love. All we have we have received from God. Whenever, therefore, we wish to act as the ministers of his love to others, let us mind the heavenly lesson, "Freely ye have received, freely give." Kindness, as soon as it looks forward to a reward or a return, though it were no other than the gratitude of the receiver, is no longer what it was ; it has fallen from its state of innocence, it assumes a mercenary character, and forfeits the very claims which it is anxious to secure.

Finally, I would observe that the true glory of kindness consists, not so much in some signal acts of generosity or charity, as in those kind offices and unpretending services of love, whose constant influence is like a healthy atmosphere, unseen, yet indispensable

to our happiness. It consists in those "sweet small courtesies of life, which sweeten the cup of existence as we drink it."

Kindness, true Christian kindness, is the guardian angel of life; it watches over its infancy, it is the household divinity that secures to the domestic fireside, amidst the storms of life, its unbroken calm, and joins together in bonds of mutual good will and confidence those whom the distinctions of society have placed in different walks of life. It has a smile for every smile, a tear for every tear; it wakes for those who slumber; it watches at the bed of sickness; it sheds through the dark chamber of death a brightness that announces the birth of a child of heaven.

The remarks I have now made on two of those moral perfections which constitute the Christian character, are but a few hasty glances at a subject which is continually growing before us as we approach it. Justice and kindness are properties of the soul, compared to which all rank and power, talent and wealth, are nothing but poverty in disguise. The rags which barely cover the righteous, disclose more of true greatness, beauty, and majesty, than the richest apparel of earthly magnificence can display. This is the light in which righteousness and kindness appear in the end, even to the superficial sight of men;—how they are looked upon by that eye that seeth in secret, even in the dark recesses of the soul, the Saviour has declared in these words, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled; Blessed are the merciful, for

they shall obtain mercy." So rich and powerful is the blessing that rests on the head of the just and the merciful, that even "he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man's reward." "Whosoever," said our Saviour, "shall give to drink to one of these little ones, a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, shall in no wise lose his reward." He taught that whatsoever we do to the least of our brethren, we do to him. And in his life all his doctrine is exemplified; there we behold all those traces of moral perfection of which I have endeavoured to point out some outlines.

Then let us look with deep and fond admiration upon the image of the living God, as it shines forth in the character of Jesus. Let us fix all the powers of the mind and the heart upon its glorious features, until they are truly and indelibly impressed upon our own hearts, and reflected from all our actions. Let us live as the children of God, that we may rise in his likeness and inherit his glory.

SERMON XXVI.

ROMANS VIII. 16.

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."

THOSE who study the word of God with attention and reverence, not for the mere words, but for the truths they express, — will find on every page occasion to pause and wonder at the amount of meaning often compressed within a brief sentence. If, only, our hearts be engaged, we are sure to find treasures in every part of Scripture. The smallest surface may cover inexhaustible mines of truth. Our text is a striking sample of this expressive beauty. For if these words of the apostle be understood in the full extent of their meaning, they will be found to be in fact a succinct abridgment of the whole of our religion. They contain at once the fundamental doctrine, and the main evidence of Christianity. For what is the great doctrine of Jesus Christ? Is not the whole of it implied in this simple assertion, that we are the children of God? And what is the great evidence of this inestimable truth? It is the spirit of man that searcheth all things, supported by the testimony of the spirit itself, that leadeth into all truth.

I shall speak first of the great doctrine of Christianity, that "we are the children of God, — and then of the joint evidence of the spirit of man and of the spirit of God.

"We are the children of God," — this truth is so often set forth, and yet is in itself so simple, that there is danger of its being considered by many as nothing more than a solemn truism. My friends, there is certainly nothing new in this doctrine. Is it on this account less interesting? Does the house you are born in become less interesting to you in proportion as it ceases to be new? Do your parents, your brothers and sisters, become less dear to you because they are with you daily? What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose the patrimony of his soul, its home? This, my friends, is the light in which we should view the simple truth declared in our text, that we are the children of God. Without this truth, without the knowledge of it, what should we be? If strangers to God, then strangers indeed! more destitute than the hapless exile, who possesses a home at least in his fond remembrance; less favored than the persecuted pilgrim, who has seen a star of hope to guide him to a land of promise. Without God in this world, what should we be but a caravan, lost in a pathless and endless desert, houseless wanderers, foundlings exposed on the shore of the vast ocean of existence, at the mercy of blind and inexorable chance. But that simple truth having once dawned upon the mind of man, he looks upon the world as a different creation. For lo! this kingdom

of doubt and of chance, in which he found not a place where to set his foot, or to lay his hand with safety, — the whole world at once becomes to him a family mansion, founded upon the rock of eternity, consecrated by all the endearments of home, and embracing all mankind as the happy inmates of the house of God. And this God is not a God of the dead, but of the living, the father of an immortal family. "The Spirit itself beareth witness, with our spirit, that we are the children of God; — and if children, then heirs, joint heirs" of eternal life with Christ Jesus our Lord.

Few and simple are the laws enjoined upon us as members of the household of God, and heirs of immortal glory. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, — and thy neighbour as thyself." It is clear, then, that the whole duty and destiny of man is revealed, and his everlasting happiness secured, by that simple truth, that we are the children of God.

My friends, if we had not been brought up in a Christian land, if we had not been taught of God by Jesus Christ; — if we had no other light than what the brutes have in common with us, — the evidence of our senses, — if we were thus without God in this world, how should we feel, if some one, in whose veracity we could confide, should come forward as a witness to this unknown divine truth, that there is a God, and that we are his children? Should we not feel as the disciples felt at the sight of the risen Saviour, who wondered, and could not believe for joy?

Our text, my friends, names two joint witnesses, who testify to that glorious truth, that we are the children of the Most High, our spirit, that is, our mind or reason, and the Spirit itself, that is, the spirit of God. Let us examine the nature and the ground of their united testimonies.

The spirit of man, that is, his reason, when it reflects calmly and deeply upon his own being, and the world in which he is placed, cannot fail to perceive a voice issuing from his heart, and reëchoed from all the works of God around him, proclaiming the blessed Gospel of adoption. This doctrine, that we are the children of God, is revealed alike by the powers and the infirmities, the wants and the glories of human nature. He who has formed this wonderful frame, and breathed into it the breath of life, who has given us these hands for the works of our earthly existence, who has given us eyes to see, and ears to hear; who has given us a voice, and tuned it to the earnest appeals of truth and the accents of love, He who has given man dominion over the whole earth, to possess and enjoy it; who has enabled us to plough even the vast fields of the inhospitable ocean, to sow there, and to reap the fruits of enterprising industry, — He certainly has endowed us with a father's bounty. Yet if He had done for us no more than this, it would be a poor pittance compared with what he has done. For He who made man, has made him a living spirit, eternal like himself. He has endowed us with reason and understanding to know all that is true, and good, and beautiful. He has inspired us with heavenly love;

He has made us moral beings, able to know and to do our duty, and to work out our own salvation. Thus the nature of man unto this day bears witness to the eternal power of those words, "Let us make man in our image!" And as we discover in ourselves the faint but lasting traces of the parental likeness, shall we not exclaim with fervent gratitude,—we are indeed spirit of thy spirit, and though we should break with the whole world, yea with our own hearts, we would cleave unto thee, our father and our friend!

Thus in the powers and glories of our nature, our spirit discerns that we are the children of God. Our wants and our infirmities bear witness to the same saving truth. It is indeed true, that from our entrance into this world we are helpless, and continually dependent on circumstances, and on our fellow-men for shelter, food, and raiment; for information, encouragement, and love. But He, who has thus made us dependent on nature and on our fellow-men, is He not the God of nature, and the creator of man? He has placed man in the midst of his fellow-men, that they might be to him friends and brothers. But if the brother betray his sacred trust,—will not the Father redeem it? We see, then, that this very state of dependence in which the Creator has placed us, implies a Father's promise, a sacred covenant of paternal and filial love. And if we think on all that God has done for man, if we reflect on his provisions for human happiness, apart from the perverse use which men have made of them for their own and each other's misery,—if we remember how often, notwithstanding

our unworthiness, he has renewed with us the covenant of his love, — shall we not say with the prophet, "Doubtless, thou art our Father"? And though the Lord had never spoken to man, his Spirit would speak to our spirit through all his works, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on her own son? Yea, she may forget, yet will I not forget thee."

When we see and hear, then, how many human beings have been, and still are without the knowledge of the true God, the father of men, let us beware lest we impute the faults of men to their kind and faithful Creator. Let us not forget what the Apostle Paul says of the heathens, that they were without excuse; because that which may be known of God was manifested in them, — his eternal power and Godhead being clearly seen by the things that are made; and his law being written in their hearts. Even from the beginning God has raised up a living and immortal witness of himself in the human heart. And thus we find wise men, in every period of the world, even among idolatrous nations, who would listen to the teaching of their own minds, rather than to the perverse doctrines of their contemporaries, and who found, in the sanctuary of their own souls, an altar of the unknown God. Nay, we know from the historical records of the most important nations of the ancient world, that their religion was at first spiritual and pure, until their ideas were corrupted by ruthless conquerors and ambitious priests. But he who implanted the germ of religious life in the hearts of his children, did not allow

it to die, though it were by their own guilt. He indeed, did not force them to draw from that inexhaustible fountain of truth, which he had opened in their own minds. But as a wise father, in educating his children, he left them to the use and guidance of their own reason, to find out of themselves what is true, to prove all things, and hold fast that which is good. Still, as a father he pitied his erring children. "He suffered all nations to walk in their ways; nevertheless he left not himself without a witness." He knew their propensity to idolatry; he knew that men were more apt to worship the earth, and the sun, on whose influence they depended for their subsistence, than to think of, and adore the power that has laid the foundations of the earth, and that rules the sun in his course. Therefore, when the nations of the earth had given themselves up to idolatry, God selected one people to preserve for mankind the knowledge of himself. To the Jews he revealed himself by immediate communications of his will, and miraculous evidences of his power, wisdom, and love. And when the teachings of Moses and the Prophets were no longer sufficient, he sent his beloved Son into the world, to lead his erring human family home to their common father. This continued, immediate divine revelation, which is preserved to us in the records of the Old and the New Testaments, is the testimony of that Spirit itself, that beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.

Besides the great displays of the Spirit of God in the history of mankind, the Christian recognises in the

history of his own life, and in the experience of his soul, the evidences of a special Providence and of spiritual aid. This spiritual aid is not, as ambitious priests have led multitudes to believe, the exclusive privilege of a few gifted minds. It is presented to every child of God, to every human being, that needs his present help, and devoutly seeks it. This help from on high does not supersede the strenuous exercise of our own faculties, conscience and reason; as the self-delusion of the fanatic conceives, or would lead us to believe. God grants the influence of his Spirit to man, only to kindle his affections, and to aid him in the exercise of his own moral and intellectual powers. Whenever the faculties with which the Creator has endowed us are of themselves sufficient to do justice to the work he has assigned us, we have no right to expect of Him a special grant of power to make up for our sinful neglect. But whenever we act in conformity to his laws, we feel, besides the approbation of our own conscience, the constant assurance, that in our holy obedience we are upheld by the Almighty framer of those laws, — to whatever result our resolute adherence to duty may lead us. Hence the influence of the Holy Spirit upon man is most evident in those trying hours, when the conviction of his own insufficiency to withstand the rising storm, impels him to implore the present help of Him whose hand can alone uphold him. It is when all human assistance is far off, and of no avail, that the fainting but confiding mind leans upon the invisible arm that first bore him into being, and is ready to guide him through the dark

labyrinth of perplexing doubt and heart-chilling fear. For the Spirit that teaches within shows him that his doubts and his fears are only the appointed martrydom of triumphant faith. It shows us, that the gloom which lies over the valley of death is nothing but the shadow of our own fears, which intercept the light of Heaven; and that all doubts and fears must vanish as soon as the morning glories of the sun of life dawn on the awaking mind. But it is not only in the hour of danger and of death that man is sure of the presence of his God. Every moment of his life, in joy and in trouble, he can draw nigh unto him in prayer. In the midst of conflicting interests and passions, he can withdraw from the strife and empty bustle of this world; and thus shut up in himself, and prepared for holy communion, he receives, in the inmost chambers of his soul, the visits of that Friend whom until then he has known perhaps only through the benefits which he daily, yet unconsciously, enjoys at his hands.

I have endeavoured to show that the whole of our destiny and duty is contained in this simple doctrine that we are the children of God; and that our faith is established, our duty is pointed out, and our eternal interests are secured by the joint testimony of our own reason, and the spirit of God speaking to us through his works and his word, and in our own hearts.

My friends, if we are convinced of the truth declared in our text, then let us keep the great commandment of filial and brotherly love; that the Spirit itself may bear witness with our spirit, that we are

indeed the children of God. It is the testimony of these two witnesses, which can alone support us all the days of our life, even to the last, when we shall all appear before the judgment seat of God. It will support us even then, and transform the sentence of the uncompromising judge into a father's blessing.

SERMON XXVII.

ROMANS VIII. 28.

"We know that all things work together for good, to them that love God."

To see, in every good thing that we possess, the kindness of the bounteous Giver, is one of the simplest lessons, it is the most direct claim to gratitude, laid down in the word of God. There is another lesson, more difficult to be understood in all its bearings, a doctrine, which, to those who hold it, is a source of contentment and consolation, even in the darkest and loneliest hours of life, when losses and disappointments shake that faith, which is founded on mercies received and favors granted, — I mean, the Scripture doctrine, that reveals to us a kind intention, a benevolent purpose, not only in the blessings, but also in the sorrows and trials of life, in the disappointment of our fondest hopes, the failure of our best intentions, in sore temptation, in poverty, sickness, and death. It is this unlimited faith in divine mercy, which is expressed in the words of my text, that, to them that love God, that is, to all who keep his commandments, not only good things, but all things,

whether in their present effects they be productive of good or evil, work together for final good. This doctrine is different from that of the Stoic philosophers, that nothing in this world is to be considered an evil, except sin; — that sickness and poverty are to be reckoned among the indifferent things, that is, things in themselves neither good nor evil. Christianity does not deprive the sufferer of the pittance of comfort to be derived from the bare acknowledgment, that his misfortune is an evil; still less would it deprive him of the sympathy of others, of which that acknowledgment is the foundation. Nor does Christianity favor the delusion of the fanatic, who considers suffering itself as a merit. The Christian system sets out with the simple teaching of nature and common sense, that any thing is a good which promotes human happiness, and that any thing that impairs it is an evil. But the philosophy of the Gospel does not stop there. It shows us, that all evil may be turned into good by him who uses it according to its true purpose, as designed by God; for then it will call forth our highest powers and best affections to meet it with firm and prudent resolution and cheerful resignation, and may thus enable us to soar above the tempests of this world, and take refuge in the unclouded regions of faith.

I intend, in this discourse, to consider the doctrine contained in the text, which applies equally to all the various evils of life, more particularly with regard to sickness. I shall endeavour to unfold some of the providential designs of sickness, and to set before

you some of the principal duties arising from this great trial, to which we are all, at any time, liable.

And, in the first place, let us set the subject in its true moral light. There are still, among us, remains of the old superstition, that all disease is to be considered as a divine judgment. Modest persons will take this view of sickness only when it comes upon themselves. They think it the part of humility to consider all their sufferings as the just consequences of their sins. But while a morbid religious anxiety leads some persons to an exaggerated self-condemnation, religious presumption tempts others to set themselves up as the interpreters of divine justice, when distress has come upon their neighbours. Now, in this view of sickness and all the other natural evils of life, as moral and judicial dispensations, there is some truth, mixed up with a radical error. It is true, with regard to all natural evils, that they may become, and frequently are, the just recompense, the deserved punishment, of those who bring them upon themselves. Poverty is the just punishment of the slothful; evil report the just reward of the slanderer; and so may sickness and death be the just judgment of the intemperate and the licentious. But there are many who are starving, and many who are despised, who, if their condition were assigned to them by divine judgment, would occupy the highest places in society, and, instead of being the dependent pensioners of human compassion, would be the stewards and almoners of God's bounty. And so there are many, who fall victims to disease, in consequence of over-

exertion in the performance of their public or private duties.

The idea, then, that sickness is a divine punishment is evidently as partial and undiscriminating a judgment as to reproach the poor man with his wants, the cripple with his crutches, or the blind man with his staff. The truth is, that we have no right to consider natural evils as punishments, or gifts of fortune as rewards; for, in a great number of cases, such a view would amount to a denial of divine justice. But although it would be unjust to judge of a man's character by his circumstances, it is true, that man is so constituted, that, by his own conduct, any condition of life, whether prosperous or adverse, may assume a moral character. Thus, wealth may be made the helpmate of charity, or it may become the abetter of avarice or prodigality. Poverty and distress may engender an abject and slavish disposition; or they may form the rough but solid foundation of Christian heroism. All conditions and events, wealth and poverty, sickness and health, which, in themselves, are neither moral nor immoral, may be made so by us. They are the materials afforded us by the Author of our being, for the formation of our character. They are means of moral discipline. They are divers branches and stages in that divine system of education, by which our inward being is led on from infancy to age, and from earthly maturity to celestial childhood.

A superficial knowledge of life and a brief experience are sufficient to impress us with the innumer-

able host of evils, that are warring against human happiness; and a longer and more intimate acquaintance confirms and deepens our impressions. My friends, at the sight of the terrible wonders around us, let us not stand aghast, like the unbelieving Jews when Jesus stood amongst them, who heard the roaring thunder, but heard not the voice, that spoke through the storm, revealing its providential mission. I have endeavoured to show, that sickness and all other natural evils are means of moral discipline, designed to work together for our good, if we rightly use and improve them. I will now mention some of the virtues, which these trials of our moral powers seem intended to call forth. The duties, with regard to sickness, are partly present, relating to the actual endurance, and partly prospective, being enjoined by our continual liability to disease. Among the prospective or preventive duties, there is none so important as temperance. I mean temperance, in the first place, in eating and drinking, in every gratification of the senses, and, moreover, in the exercise of all our intellectual and active powers. As for the intemperate, in the common sense of the word, the drunkard, the glutton, the licentious, the gross and the refined sensualist, those who live in habitual excess, and those who trespass occasionally, all, in fact, who cannot see the cup of pleasure, without grasping it, and drinking it to the last drop, — to them, we say, there is no safety, no hope of reformation, but in entire abstinence. And it is well, — if the pleadings of friendship, of honor, of religion, should not move the

slave of the senses to break his chains, — it is well, that the uncompromising doctrine, Taste not, handle not, touch not, should be enforced by the wholesome apprehension of disease, and the terrors of death. It is well for him to be reminded, that the destroying angel is even now hovering over him, and that it is the extreme of folly to think himself secure from the fatal arrow, because he does not see a menacing form, or hear the twang of the bowstring. But temperance is to be recommended to yet another class of individuals, whom it is hardly fair to class under the same name, whose intemperance is almost a virtue, as it consists in an immoderate use of the best powers for the best purposes. To these, the preaching of total abstinence would be ill applied and false; and motives of fear would have but little influence with those, whose disinterested love has taught them to cast out fear. It would be unjust to deny the praise of martyrdom to the man who impairs his health or loses his life through devotion to duty, which leads him to a wasteful, though a generous disregard of his safety. But Christianity, which is satisfied with nothing short of perfection, demands, not only that we should endanger our health, and lay down our lives, if necessary, but commands us to save, and carefully to preserve, these precious and indispensable instruments of duty. Even the Chief of martyrs, who entered upon his benevolent mission with a perfect knowledge that it must cost him his life, even he, for some time, tried to save himself from the fury of those who were ready to stone him,

because his work was not finished, and his time was not come. It is, then, not by considerations of fear, but of love, that we would urge upon those, who have consecrated themselves to duty, and at any time stand ready to be offered up, the religious duty, of acting as wise stewards of their own health, and as faithful guardians of that of their friends.

Besides temperance, in the wide sense of the word, there is another virtue that is called for, both by the danger of sickness, and by sickness itself. It is courage, — courage, the vital warmth of the soul, which keeps the eye clear, the hand steady, and the head cool, while the heart beats high with magnanimous energy. Courage is the moral oxygen, in which every virtue burns with a brighter light; while fear palsies every attempt at moral excellence. Struck by fear, veracity begins to equivocate, benevolence stops to calculate the consequences, and religion itself becomes the perfection of slavery. Fear is the most powerful agent and conductor of disease; courage the surest of all preservatives. True courage makes us calm, observing, resolute, and persevering. Cowardice bewilders the mind, and chills the heart. Hence it has been observed, in former times, and not many years ago during the prevalence of the cholera, that, at the approach of pestilence or of famine, many persons of regular habits, struck by the panic, became intemperate, and, like bewildered birds, threw themselves headlong into the jaws of the spoiler. The soldier in the field, who has ears only for the confused cries and alarms about him, and not for the

voice of command and duty, is more likely to endanger his friends and himself, than the approaching enemy.

Another virtue, which the danger of disease, more perhaps than any thing else, is calculated to call forth, is Christian benevolence; active and devoted love. Husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, all those, who are united by the sacred covenant of love, feel their union more and more truly and vividly the more the danger of interruption increases. When sickness, seizing upon one of them, threatens their separation, the more violent its grasp, the more closely and firmly they cling together. But the common danger not only impresses us more forcibly with our duties to our nearest friends, but enlarges our family circle, reminding us of what, as men, we owe to every human being, — of the solemn and tender ties which bind us, as Christians, to every child of God. It is a source of comfort and grateful joy to every friend of man, to know that there are, and at all times have been, many who have gone forth resolutely to the relief of their suffering fellow-men; reaching out a helping hand, not merely from a distance, by the power of money and influence in society; but as Jesus, when he healed the leper, did not stand far off while he spoke the saving words, but boldly and kindly touched the seared hand, so there are many, whose love has proved strong enough to drive out fear, and overcome disgust, who have charged themselves with the sacred

offices of the sick-room, lending their strength to the drooping frame, and gladdening, with calm sympathy, the sinking heart. But there are also not a few, whose habitual selfishness has proved too strong for the pressing cry of misery around them. O how much easier is it to die, than to hear, through a whole life, issuing from our own prophetic hearts, those words of condemnation, which will resound, at last, from the judgment-seat, before which all must appear, — "I was sick and ye visited me not." To those who are connected by strong and sacred bonds, whom it would be superfluous to address on their common duties to each other in case of sickness, to these the approach of danger has a more private and tender word of advice. Is your feeling of security in each other's services, in time of need, the result of your habitual living together, or has the germ of affection, planted in the heart, actually begun to strike deep roots in the immortal ground of your being? When the twilight of death sets in, when sight and hearing are gone, still a friend may recognise his friend by the faintest pressure of the hand. But when all the senses vanish one by one, like the stars in the rising dawn, is the memory of your friend, which you have laid up in your heart, the mere shadow of his outward appearance, or have you looked long enough on the inward countenance of the departed, to feel assured, that, when you have ceased to see with your mortal eyes, you shall know him with the same joyful certainty, with which the dis-

ciples recognised their well-known friend in the transfigured Saviour? O let us all search our hearts, and sift our affections, whether they be founded on transient circumstances, on appearances, on habit, — or on the spirit of love, that knows no change, but from strength to strength, and from glory to glory.

The last virtue, which I would mention among our moral supports in time of trouble, is Christian faith, — faith in the immortality of our souls, faith in the just and merciful providence of our God, who maketh all things, even sickness, distress, and death, to work together for good to them that love him. Faith is the life-spring of courage and of love. We know that the Saviour of the world and his chosen friends, though aided by miraculous power, were not saved from trouble, persecution, and death. Why should we refuse the cup which our Saviour drank, resigning his will to the will of the Father who gave it? Why should we refuse to be perfected by suffering as he was? Why should we not bow our necks, and, like him, take our cross for the glory that is set before us? Then, if disease come upon us, let us use all the means that experience and sound reason can suggest. But, should all efforts fail, still, let us not be cast down, as those who have no hope, but, in the shipwreck of our human strength, take hold, in joyful confidence, upon him who is the life of our souls, and the rock of our salvation.

I have thus set before you the providential design of sickness, and some of those virtues, which it seems

most imperiously to call for as moral supports,—temperance, courage, benevolence, and faith. Thus armed, let us quietly await what the Lord, in his own time, may send us, whether it be health, or sickness, life or death;—let us say, with Jesus, "Father, thy will be done."

SERMON XXVIII.

(WRITTEN FOR THE STUDENTS OF HARVARD UNIVERSITY.)

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2 CORINTHIANS III. 6.

"The letter killeth; the spirit giveth life."

BY the letter that killeth, the Apostle means the forms, rites, and observances of the law, or the Old Testament. The spirit that giveth life is the spirit of truth and love, revealed in the Gospel of Jesus. Those sacred forms and ordinances under which the people had once lived and worshipped, had served their purpose and answered their end; the nature of man, his moral and religious wants, had outgrown the contracted views and habits of former days; the forms of the law had become useless and dead, — but the spirit that once was embodied in these forms, even the spirit of the Old Testament, had risen again in the New, in its own purity and transcendent glory, to guide and to bless all nations.

A few simple and confiding souls having caught the first rays of the great luminary that had silently risen upon the slumbering world, and before which the seven lamps of the temple grew dim, resolutely cast

off the worship of forms, and embraced the ministry of the spirit. But by far the greater number continued to reverence the dead body of the law as a sacred and wonder-working relic, which was thought of itself sufficient to secure to the offspring of Abraham the kingdom of God, which He, the Father of all, had designed for the whole family of man. It was to these obstinate adherents to the Jewish law that Jesus addressed the words, "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing," — and it was to half converted Christians, to those who preferred to pray with a veil upon their heart, while the Holy of Holies was thrown open to every child of God, that the Apostle said, "the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life."

It is, then, religion, it is Christianity, to which the words of the text bear the most direct reference; and here they are singularly true, not only with regard to Jewish forms and ceremonies, but equally so to all creeds and observances. These are highly proper and beneficial, so long and so far as they are the true expression and the fit organs of the ever-growing spirit of religion. But to insist upon any established rule of faith and conduct as the standard form in which the mind of man, in all the future ages of the world, should be cast and moulded, is no more reasonable or practicable than to chain to the living, and condemn them to drag along through life, the dead bodies of all preceding generations.

The principle that the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life, is most strictly applicable to the written records of our religion. So long as we continue to con-

sider the literal or figurative meaning of any passage of Scripture as an explicit declaration of abstract truth, — what are all our exhortations from the pulpit to read the word of God; what are the efforts of our Bible societies to spread it, what are they but a new-fashioned repetition of the crusades, directed to conquer the sepulchre, without ever approaching the spirit of Jesus Christ?

But our text is applicable not merely to religion and theology, — a science in which no one graduates before his death; but every profession and occupation in life has both its dead letter and its quickening spirit. What is the practice of the law without the spirit of justice; what is the medical profession without the spirit with which Jesus healed the sick; what is commerce without the soul of enterprising industry and open-handed beneficence; what are they all, but the dead and deadening letter of the book of life? The smallest services, nay, the most inefficient efforts at serving or accommodating another, may be quickened, ennobled, and sanctified, by a spirit for which this life possesses no adequate reward; there are many common and hired services performed from motives for which the richest compensation does not free the employer from the debt of gratitude he owes to his dependent; there is many a kind word spoken in secret, many a friendly lift to ease the burden of life, which is known only to Him who seeth in secret, and who counts whatever is done to the least of his children as done for the Parent of all; who lifteth up the light of his countenance upon every good intention

as the seed of promise, sown in darkness and weakness, to be raised in glory, to grow up into a harvest of light and eternal life.

But it is not my purpose now to follow up, in every direction, the bearings of our text upon the various pursuits of man; but rather to concentrate my remarks upon that one in which we all, teachers and pupils, participate. As fellow-students, I would invite you to join me in meditating upon our text in its strictest application to the characteristic pursuits of a student, particularly with regard to college life and education. Suppose, then, a student of this college to be up at the ringing of the first prayer bell, to attend prayers regularly, and with respectful silence; suppose him to improve his study hours for preparing his lessons, and to attend to all his college exercises punctually; — does he not deserve the name of a true and faithful student? He surely performs his duty, but whether the whole, or only a part of his duty, still depends on other circumstances. For with all this prompt attendance to college rules and injunctions, without which education is an impossibility, — you may come up only to the dead letter, without walking in the spirit of your duties.

But suppose, further, that a student is not satisfied with going through the daily round of his duties, but that, instigated by a spirit of noble emulation, he strives after a high standing among his classmates, a part on commencement, or other distinctions and honors in the gift of the college. Is not such a student superior to the dead letter, and filled with the true spirit

of his profession? This striving after distinction is certainly more honorable than a tame mechanical compliance with the everyday demands of college life; and it is a fact, that this spirit of honorable ambition has roused many to high intellectual attainments. Still, in order to judge rightly, we must do in this, as in all cases in which we cannot know by the fruits whether they be the natural produce of a healthful growth of the mind, or the forced and artificial specimens of a short-lived hothouse culture.

We must "try and discern the spirits"; and this inquiry into the sources of intellectual eminence, will surely lead us to the result, that the spirit of ambition and emulation is not the pure spirit of study, which is no other than the spirit of truth. The love of distinction, as the principal motive to study, is characteristic of one whose views are higher than those of the literary journeyman, and not high enough to make him a student in spirit and in truth. He in whom the spirit of study, the spirit of truth is alive, and continually manifesting itself in new intellectual efforts, the true scholar, as well as the true hero, looks upon external distinctions, upon titles and badges, as things insignificant in themselves, which are to be received only out of respect for those who confer them. Marks of distinction are tolerable only when they are merited, and, for this very reason, in most cases useless. Those who desire to take their stand amidst the realities, and to engage in the arduous pursuits of life, do not or should not care much whether, in the eyes of those who look upon life as a stage, they appear as successful actors.

Of one thing, my friends, you may be sure, that the diploma which you expect to carry home with you from this literary institution, though delivered to you in the most authentic form, unless it be countersigned and attested in the inner court of the mind and heart of the receiver, will be nothing to you but a certificate of a square of years passed within the college walls, sufficient indeed to prove an *alibi* in a court of justice, but not sufficient to establish the competency of the bearer to meet the demands which society has upon every graduate of Harvard College.

I fear there are some in whose minds the word *study* calls up directly, only the distressing thoughts of grammar, dictionary, and text-book; or at most the alluring prospects of college honors and literary distinctions, as the only incitements powerful enough to support a man under the sore trials of close application. My friends, the diligent use of the grammar, the dictionary, and the text-book, which are the indispensable tools of your profession, is the only way to render yourselves independent in your pursuits; and thus they are the best preparation for the perplexing cares, and intricate and unwieldy interests of life, in which you are soon to engage. For there is no Hamiltonian method to read off, without conning, the difficult passages in the book of human life. But other and far higher inducements to diligence present themselves to the true student, who is so well described by the Preacher of Wisdom, as one that "applieth his heart to know, and to search, and to seek out wisdom, and the reason of things." Among the manifold pursuits of man,

that of the student is the only one in which he can satisfy that perpetual desire in human nature, which springs up in the child as a restless curiosity, and which grows with the man into a desire to know the properties and the reason of all things that are made, — to search even the deep things of God.

We are informed in Holy Writ that the Lord is a God of knowledge, who "by wisdom hath founded the earth, and by understanding hath established the heavens." The true student, then, he who calls wisdom his sister, and understanding his kinswoman, enters into a more intimate union with the omniscient Spirit that pervades, sustains, and governs the universe which is his work. Every progress he makes in the knowledge of man or of nature brings him nearer to God; while, at the same time, it qualifies him for that sphere of action and usefulness, which he has to create for himself, and to sustain in life. For as the world would be a chaos without the creative wisdom of God, so human life would be a bewildering maze without the operation of sound and practical knowledge, the fruit of a thorough and comprehensive education. It is easy to see how all the various branches of instruction, the knowledge of mathematics, of natural history and philosophy, the study of the languages, of human history, of ancient and modern literature, and of moral and political philosophy and religion, — in short, how all the various subjects included in the cycle of a college education, coöperate to enlarge and elevate, to invigorate and refine the mind. It is easy to perceive how every object of intellectual pursuit, however

small in itself, is ready to put in its mite into the treasury of knowledge, to fit out the pupil for life, to secure him the mastery over material things, a sphere of independent usefulness in society, and a deep and just conception of God, derived from a well-directed and assiduous study of all his works.

My friends, in coping with the details and abstract forms which belong to every study, and, indeed, to every pursuit in life, if you do not lose sight of the golden prize that awaits you at the end of every journey in your infinite course, great and glorious is the prospect to him who applies his heart to wisdom. But you must never forget that the grand and beautiful prospects in science and in life cannot be attained by a smooth and level road, but by a steep and rugged ascent. Then, and only then, you will be in no danger of stopping short at the dead letter, but you will proceed boldly and joyfully, guided by that Spirit which alone can lead us into all truth. With this conviction in your mind, and this determination in your heart, you need not fear lest you should lose your path in the clouds. Only proceed higher and higher, and the clouds, which now hang above your heads, will soon be beneath your feet. I say, do not stop at the dead letter of your profession; but this object you cannot effect by timidly shunning or evading it. "The slothful man saith there is a lion in the way; a lion is in the streets;" but the brave man steps forth to clear the way for himself and his neighbours from the common enemy. Then let me exhort you, my friends, in the words of the preacher, "Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go; keep her, for she is thy life."

This seminary of learning is a city set upon a hill; the eyes of the country are upon it. The eyes of your friends, many anxious and confiding hearts, are fastened upon you, watching and praying for your progress; some, perhaps, whose guiding hands, and persuasive lips, and prayerful hearts are now sealed in death, are looking from on high; many, here on earth, who would gladly go down to the grave, if so they could protect you and save you from sloth, from impurity, from those evils, which, under the garb of noble freedom or innocent pastime, would entice you from the path of rectitude, and destroy the peace of your immortal souls. Strive, then, to master the dead letter, and boldly follow the life-giving Spirit that leads into all truth. Strive to enter into the reason of all things; search the foundations of your own mind. Do not linger on the surface, but strike deep, until you have reached that blessed spring, whose living waters the winter frosts and the summer heats of life cannot freeze or dry up, even the wellspring of wisdom from the deep waters of the heart. "And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon you, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord."

SERMON XXIX.

MATTHEW XIV. 26.

"And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, 'It is a spirit;' and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, 'Be of good cheer, it is I; be not afraid.'"

SOME may be inclined to smile at the superstitious fear of the disciples, when they saw Jesus walking on the sea, and to congratulate themselves on their good fortune in living in an age of the world, in which spirits or ghosts, instead of terrifying men, have become the amusement of children, being locked up safely within the charmed covers of a fairy book.

But it has been truly said of popular superstitions, that, however easy it be to dispel the phantoms to which they give rise, by the exorcism of common sense and the strong spell of ridicule, yet all superstition has a foundation in human nature, against which the attacks of a matter-of-fact philosophy may not avail. For it so happens, that persons, thinking themselves altogether superior to the nursery tales of ghosts and spectres, are haunted by phantoms of their own creation, to which they surrender their peace of mind and their reason. To a rational,

a religious being, to a true disciple of Christ, there is but one thing that should excite his fear; besides this, every other cause of fear is a phantom of his own creation, the offspring of that very superstition which he derides, when it appears in other forms. The wicked alone has, within, a just cause of fear; and the terrors, that haunt his mind, are not creatures of superstition, but stern realities, which no profane ridicule or atheistic speculation can charm away. But the terrors of the just are workings of superstition, which vanish before the light of spiritual truth; and if we only have courage enough to look singly and steadfastly upon the cause of our apprehensions, we may find ourselves in a situation similar to that of the terrified disciples, when they saw Jesus walking on the sea. For that which troubles our anxious hearts, that which appears to us as a terrifying spirit, if we approach it in good faith, may be in reality our best friend, even the Saviour of our souls.

Let us examine some of the things, which, even in this noonday of civilization, fill the minds of some conscientious people with superstitious fear. Some persons, who are truly religious, some followers of Jesus, who, even if they had a choice, would go to no other teacher than him who alone had the words of eternal life, look with apprehension and misgiving upon the progress of skepticism amongst us. Because the most hurtful and absurd doctrines have been believed, and the best established and most salutary principles have been called in question, they are apt to think, that there is no way of settling the

disputed boundaries between doubt and faith. Fearful of the continual cross-questioning of doubt, they do not like to have their faith subjected to a trial which might lead to an unfavorable sentence. They therefore think, with a celebrated Roman orator and philosopher, that they would rather err with Plato, who believed in God and the immortality of the soul, than be right with Epicurus, who denied these doctrines.

To me, however, this celebrated saying of the Roman philosopher seems fitted to undermine and unsettle, rather than to establish and confirm, the foundations of faith. This sentiment has evidently had a powerful influence in some treatises of theologians, intended to prove the principles of Christianity, but exhibiting the zeal and ingenuity of the advocate, rather than the calm impartiality of the judge. They seem to argue under the continual fear of the consequences, if their argument should be found wanting. Therefore, these apologies for Christianity do not carry conviction to hearts that are determined to believe or disbelieve according to evidence, without any reference to consequences.

And, on the other hand, those, whose Christianity rests on the fear of the consequences of infidelity, are indeed sure, that their house is not built on the sand; they know it is built on a rock; yet they live in continual dread, lest their title to the ground on which it stands should be found to have a flaw.

I think, then, that the sentiment to which I have alluded, which expresses a willingness to adopt a

profitable error, rather than an injurious truth, is wholly unworthy of a philosopher, that is, a lover of truth. I do not speak now of the gross delusion, that, in the long run, any thing but truth could be profitable to man, or any thing so injurious as expedient falsehood. I speak of the fear of consequences, as affecting the freedom and impartiality of our investigation. I maintain, that, unless we are determined to be right with him that is right, whoever he be, and whatever doctrine he advocate, we shall never arrive at a calm, enlightened, and independent faith. We live in continual dread of what may be said to weaken our convictions. Not only the random shafts of infidel conjecture terrify the timorous believer; but even any unusual mode of explaining certain passages of Scripture, from which he has hitherto deduced different views of Christ and his Gospel. He is apt to be alarmed at the daring of the interpreters, and, like Mary at the sepulchre, to grieve that they have taken away his Lord, and he knows not where they have laid him. He is not aware, that it is the dead body that he is seeking, or trying to hold fast, instead of inquiring after the living and quickening spirit of Christianity. He is not aware, that this very skepticism, that appears to him as a terrifying spirit, is the thing he stands most in need of. For myself I can certainly say, that, next to the Gospel itself, the books that have been written against it have been the most efficient promoters of my belief in its divine truth. But whether this individual experience be of any value to others or not, so much is certain, if you have

once begun to doubt, it is vain to flee from the tempter, or to hope to find peace in the thought, that there are reasons for, as well as against, religion. Instead of seeking safety in flight, or in a dangerous neutrality, you must carry the war into the enemy's own country. Investigation must be met by investigation; argument by argument, and not by confident assertion or denunciation. Be not afraid! Skepticism is like the ocean, which, to him who judges only according to sight, seems pathless and endless. But he, who launches upon it with a resolute love of truth for his compass, will find, that a straight-forward course, though at first it lead him further and further from the faith of childhood, will at last bring him back to faith; yet not to a faith adopted blindly on the authority of another, but to a faith enlightened and confirmed, by having circumnavigated the whole ocean of doubt. So much for the superstitious fear of skepticism, which is the inseparable companion of free inquiry, of which we do not hesitate to say, "Only let free inquiry have its perfect way, and it will surely lead to a rational and spiritual faith.

There is superstition, also, in the dread of the various evils of life; such as the loss of property, of popularity, of health, of life itself. I do not say, that these are not to be considered as evils; but I maintain, that the experience of evil, as well as of good, is necessary to the formation of a true, independent, just, benevolent, and religious character. I maintain, too, that, to some men, those evils, at the very time at which they happen to come upon them, are the greatest possible blessings.

To the man, who has acquired property by sober industry, and has been in the habit of using it, in his domestic establishment, with a view to comfort and good taste, in preference to senseless competition in show and luxury; to him, who, in the days of his prosperity, has remembered, that his duties as a son, a brother, a father, are not confined to his own house, but extend over the whole family of man; to such a man, the loss of his property, of so many means of doing good, is a loss indeed. And yet, even he may find reasons for being grateful for his poverty, not only because it teaches him the duties of self-denial and contentment, but because it is to him a revelation of new means of doing good. It may teach him the almsgiving of benevolent thought and action; it may teach him that the charity, which is within the reach of the poorest, is, in truth, the richest offering on the altar of humanity.

But to him, who has made his way in the world, spurning the hard-earned wages of sober industry, whose wealth is the livery of a favored servant of fortune, whose benevolence and devotion have ever been confined to his fellow-servants wearing the same glittering uniform, to the man, who has done his alms never otherwise than in public, and, as a penalty paid for greatness, with a reckless unconcern, whether all the world beside him swim or sink, to such a man the loss of property comes, indeed, like a terrifying spirit walking on the sea; yet if he will but receive it with an humble, teachable disposition, it may prove to be the Saviour of his soul. The

warnings of others, while he was in the height of his prosperity, were easily set aside as the expressions of envy, or jealousy, or moralizing fear; but in the falling pillars of his own fortune there is a power of argument, which no self-complacent sophistry can reason away. He, who is in the habit of disregarding the still small voice, that speaks in his heart, may give heed to the earthquake and the fire that consume his substance. But O! for the blindness, the obstinate, suicidal blindness of those who put their trust in riches, and use them so as to unfit themselves for the changing tide of fortune; who tremble and despair when they see the destroying angel enter their own dwellings, because they have looked on with heedless and heartless unconcern, while he was hovering over those of their neighbours.

As with the loss of property, so it is with the loss of health. The benefits of health are plain to all; the blessings of sickness are not less real; but, in order to be perceived and appreciated, they require a faithful study of the meaning which Providence has laid up in the dark passages of the book of life. No one but he, who has been sick in the midst of his nearest friends, has a full conception of the unspeakable blessings of home; and no one, who has not been sick among strangers, knows how much kindness there is in the world; how much of the original, sacred feeling of brotherhood still exists in the great family of man, in spite of the separations and estrangements induced by selfish pursuits and interests. It

is from sickness, that even the selfish learn at least the prudence of kindness; while it teaches the benevolent, by the aid of their own experience, how to minister to the relief and comfort of the distressed.

But the beneficial tendency of sickness appears most clearly in the case of those, who, at its first approach, shrink from it with the greatest dread, and are least likely to appreciate its providential fitness to minister to their good.

There are, especially in great cities, but sometimes also in towns and villages, men and women, who make the outside of things, the art of seeming, the science of fair appearances, the chief study and pursuit of their lives. Instead of seeking and being satisfied with the substantial comforts and true refinements of life, instead of devoting themselves to the cultivation of their minds and hearts, and the promotion of the great permanent interests of society, the men and the women of fashion live, and move, and have their being in the drawingroom. In order to make room for such a character, life must be carefully divested of every thing like reality, and converted into a theatric play, the chief merit of which consists, not in the plot, or in the sentiments expressed by the actors, but in the changing of scenes, and the display of decorations. In order to act a part in such a life of show and artificial excitement, the possession of outward accomplishments, riches, and health, are indispensable conditions. In such a life, the chief aim of which is to seem to be what we are not, and not to seem what we are, if the hand of poverty or of sickness seizes

the successful actor, and hurries him off the stage, no wonder if the sober realities of life, thus breaking in upon a world of delusion, appear to him as a terrifying visitation from another sphere. He, who has neglected to form or to preserve any intimate friendships, lest a tender devotion to individuals should interfere with the great object of gratifying his own vanity and that of his admirers, is suddenly compelled to exchange the splendid routine of fashionable pleasure for the tedious monotony of the sick-room. Instead of the circle of admirers, vieing with each other in ministering to his whims, he finds no one truly interested in him, no one willing to seek him in the dark, lonely chamber, to relieve the insufferable tediousness of a long and painful confinement; he is dependent on a hired nurse, for services which money cannot buy, services of friendship, of tender interest and compassion. Is it possible even for the terrified imagination to conceive a scene more appalling to such a being than the present reality?

But is it true, that the circumstances, in which the discarded favorite of fortune, the ruined votary of pleasure, is placed, are fit instruments only of terror and dismay? In the darkness of that chamber is there no light? In its loneliness is there no presence? In that silence is there no voice? The desertion of fashionable admirers, the dependence on the services of some one unknown to the days of our pride, — these incontestable facts, are they not teachers and preachers? Do they not proclaim the truth, that the time must come, when that which we once thought

every thing shall become as nothing, and that which was accounted little or nothing become to us every thing? If the loss of health and outward possessions should lead the sufferer to the great discovery, that he has a soul, and that the Father of the great family of immortal spirits is his Father, surely the sense of his presence will dispel the loneliness of the sick-chamber; and no place will appear to him so cheerless, solitary, and empty, as the fashionable drawingroom. In that instructive stillness, when its fond delusions fade away from the awaking mind, the terrors, also, which accompanied the sudden change, and the murmurs of the repining heart, die away before the rising accents of a still small voice, that speaks to the troubled spirit, "It is I; be not afraid!" And the heart, on which all the blessings of prosperity failed to make a religious impression, learns, from the withdrawal, what is the intent of Providence in granting, and in taking them away. It learns to understand, who are the friends that do, and that do not, desert us; and what are the perennial sources of joy, that may be found in the deserts as in the fertile valleys, and whose waters are springing up into everlasting life.

I have endeavoured to show, that the childish dread, with which some look upon sickness, is a superstition which prevents the terrified disciple from recognising, in the threatening visitation, the saving design of Providence.

As with the dread of sickness, so is it with the fear of death.

Life is a great good. Hence, the love of life and the fear of death are natural to every being, in whom the consciousness of existence is blended with the certainty of dissolution. Still more, we recognise in the fear of death, implanted in man, not only its natural cause, but its moral purpose. It leads us to a constant, rational care for our own life, and a pious solicitude for that of our friends. It induces society to throw the shield of the law over the weak, and to point its sword against the violent. But life, though a great good to all, is not the greatest good, except to the unbeliever. There are cases, in which life cannot be preserved except at the sacrifice of duty. It is then, that, in a good man, the fear of life grows stronger than the fear of death. When the cause of humanity is at stake, when truth, justice, or freedom can be saved or redeemed only at the price of martyrdom, then the Christian thinks of nought but those immortal words; "He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life shall find it." It is then, that the fear of death is no longer a natural and rational apprehension, but a degrading superstition.

But it is not only in those great and trying moments, when Providence, in its mysterious dealings, says to the individual, "I have set before you, this day, life and good, and death and evil;" — but at all times it behoves us to look upon the end of life, not as those who have no hope beyond, but with a cautious regard for that which now is, and an enlightened, fearless trust concerning that which is to be.

He, who has studied the teachings of that Gospel which has brought life and immortality to light, and has compared its testimony with the book of revelation within him; he, who endeavours to enter into the providential design, expressed in every work of God, and has found the evidences of eternal life contained in his own intellectual, moral, and spiritual nature, he is no longer in the bondage of the fear of death, but hath already passed from death unto life. To him there is nothing strange or mysterious in that most interesting, most instructive, and inspiring portion of human history, which, to the unbeliever, is a tissue of inexplicable contradictions. I mean the history of the martyrs, of those, who, for a principle which they thought true, have deliberately laid down their lives. He, who believes that the whole intellectual, moral, and spiritual life of man, the reasoning mind, the trusting heart, the virtuous will, are nothing but the effects of a peculiar organization of matter, must find it hard, indeed, to account for a power in man, which deliberately resolves, and gives up to destruction this very material organization, of which it is itself the effect. But the Christian, — when he looks on him, who showed himself the Prince of life, inasmuch as of his own self he laid down his life, and of his own self took it again, — feels in his own soul the same power, the same faith; a faith which does not need the confirmation of a miracle, because it is its own sufficient evidence; and he enjoys the superior blessedness of those, who have not seen, and yet have believed. To him there is nothing strange in

the account of that Hebrew mother, who, although the law of Moses is all but silent on the subject of a life to come, exhorted her seven sons freely to undergo a most cruel death, rather than deny the truth, and violate the law of God. Who can withstand or contradict the philosophy of grief, expressed in that Hebrew mother's admonition to her sons, "Look upon the heaven, and the earth, and all that is therein, and consider, that God made them of things that are not; and so was mankind made likewise. For I neither gave you breath nor life, neither was it I that formed the members of every one of you.

"But doubtless the Creator of the world, who formed the generation of man, and found out the beginning of all things, will also, of his own accord, give you breath and life again, as you now regard not your own selves for his law's sake."

SERMON XXX.

ROMANS v. 3, 4, 5.

"We glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed."

TRIBULATION, patience, experience, hope,—these are the four cardinal points in the moral reasoning of the Apostle. The practical importance, as well as the substantial truth of the lesson which is conveyed in these words, will be perceived and felt by every one who will try them by the experience of his own life.

There is hardly one that has reached the meridian of life, who has not in some way experienced tribulation; nay, often in the morning of life a dark dispensation crosses and interrupts the bright anticipations of childhood, and casts a deep shade over the greater part of our earthly existence. There are some tribulations, such as poverty, the loss of friends, oppression and persecution, which make the sufferer an object of general interest and compassion; but there are other trials, more severe, perhaps, and oppressive still,—blasted hopes, and disappointed affections, which no one pities, because no one knows them, except the heart which knoweth its own bitterness, and He who seeth in secret, and is alone able to wipe away all tears from

all eyes. Nay, there are cases in which the sufferer is deprived even of the last miserable consolation, that of pitying himself, because he is himself the author of his sufferings. Still, even in these cases, one compassionate eye is fixed upon the secret tribulations of the self-accusing spirit, as a father pitieth his children, even where pity is not deserved.

The Apostle says, tribulation worketh patience. This is the providential design; it is the moral, but not the natural effect of tribulation. Tribulation, if it be not counteracted by moral effort, produces fear, doubt, and despondency. When I read the words of the Psalmist, "My soul is disquieted, my soul is cast down within me;" or the words of Jesus in Gethsemane, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death,"—"O, my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me;" or that outburst of agonized nature, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" I see in these expressions the natural, the first fruits of tribulation. The words of prophecy, that in the day of vengeance men's hearts shall fail them for fear, and the love of many shall wax cold, have been verified and fulfilled, only too often, in the history of human trials and sufferings. And what is it that can change these natural consequences of tribulation, fear, doubt, and despondency, into the opposite emotions of faith, courage, and hope? When impotent or unwilling to bear the load of adversity, can the compassion of others afford us support? Great indeed is the power of compassion, of tender sympathy, to soothe the troubled spirit. But, in the first place, it cannot be denied that

the generous impulses of human nature are often infected by impure ingredients. When we see the first effect of human misery upon the beholders, drawing forth a plentiful tribute of sympathetic grief from the driest eye, we feel constrained to believe in the essential goodness of man. But again, when we behold the unwillingness of many of these compassionate mourners to proceed from tears to action, to redeem these pledges of compassion by personal sacrifices, we are tempted to side with the philosophic advocate of human depravity, who says, "that in compassion there is more of self-love than of love." It cannot be denied, that the sight of suffering virtue tempts us to look down with compassion on the exhibition of suffering from which we are exempt, rather than to look up with humility to the display of superior virtue. And surely, of all tribulations, all inflictions of human cruelty, there is none so insufferable to a generous mind, as that of being the object of proud compassion. Still, this dark picture is not a true likeness of human nature. Amidst many false or insufficient evidences of sympathy, there are tears not desecrated by pride, nor paid as a weak substitute for more substantial tokens of love, but made more bitter by the thought that actions are impossible, that these poor offerings of overflowing pity are all we have to give for the redress of wrong and the relief of suffering innocence. Still, these tears of pure compassion, though they can soothe the heavy heart, fail of carrying into effect the great providential design of tribulation. They lighten the heavy burden, but they do not increase the power of the soul

to bear it, and endure to the end. Nothing that others can do for us, neither pity, nor encouragement, nor rebuke; nothing but patience, the teacher of experience, the mother of hope, can work out our salvation from fear and dismay. It was patience that enabled the Psalmist, from the depth of his depression and inward disquietude, to look to the fountain head of hope. It was patience, the holy spirit of resignation, which enabled the Saviour to rise from a trembling earthly desire that the cup of death might pass from him, with the sublime prayer, "Father, not my will but thine be done;" and, breaking through the gloom of despondency that for a moment overcast the glory of the cross, to commend his spirit into the hands of Him by whom he thought himself forsaken.

Patience secures to man the most precious and most enduring of all possessions, even the possession of his own soul. "In your patience possess ye your souls," was the advice with which the Saviour fortified the hearts of his disciples to meet the tribulations and persecutions which awaited them; and there is no situation or condition of life in which the vital importance of this advice is not felt. It speaks to the man of business, warning him against an impatient, and, therefore, heedless, and probably ruinous pursuit of gain. It speaks to the parent, the teacher, advising them to watch with patient care the individual capacity and gradual unfolding of the minds of each of their children; to select the seeds of truth, and adapt them to the soil and the season in which they are to grow. It speaks to the judge, as he is weighing the complicated

mass of contradictory evidence, brought forward by contending parties. It advises him who would open his mouth in the public assembly, and teach the people, either as a statesman or a clergyman, "to labor," as an eloquent Quaker preacher has said, "for an inward stillness; at no time to seek for words, but to live in the spirit of truth; and utter that to the people which truth has opened in him." Most of all, to the troubled spirit, disturbed by doubts, harassed by fears, cast down by disappointments, despairing alike of the world and of himself, it comes down as a voice from heaven, "Be still, and know that I am God!"

Patience is a virtue, when it leads us calmly to endure unavoidable and irremediable evils. With regard to evils which can be removed by a rightous effort of our own determined will, patience is sin, and impatience a virtue. He who endures injustice, which may be successfully opposed; he who listens in silence to falsehood, which, by his means, may be refuted and disproved; he who, in the midst of active preparations for the exercise of lawless violence, chooses to remain a passive spectator, is virtually a perpetrator of crimes, which, but for his guilty patience, would have been impossible. Christian patience does not consist in a tame submission to injury, which, by the timely exercise of efficient prudence and rightful interposition, might have been prevented or removed. True Christian patience consists in the calm, heroic endurance of unavoidable and irresistible evils. This patience worketh experience.

Some of the best interpreters of the New Testament maintain that the word experience, in this pas-

sage, is not a correct version of the original; that we should read, patience worketh approved integrity, or tried probity. I think there is good reason for this change in the translation of the passage. But if we only understand by experience what is in truth the most valuable part of human experience, the two translations will be found to convey very nearly the same meaning. Experience, in this case, does not mean an extensive and varied knowledge of passing events, such as is the result of a long life passed under various circumstances; but an experimental acquaintance with our own moral powers, such as can be acquired only by a bold resistance or patient endurance of tribulation, and the different forms of moral and physical evil. Experience, thus defined, is a knowledge of ourselves, our moral nature, which is gained only by moral effort, by tried probity or approved integrity, so that the two different versions of our text, if properly understood, convey essentially the same meaning.

Without experience, that is, experimental knowledge or habitual exercise of our capacities and powers, the very existence of our moral freedom is to us as if it were not; and even the hope of immortality is but a random conjecture or a traditional report.

For of what value is the honesty, the veracity, the philanthropy of a man who has never been tempted, either by the means of selfish indulgence to be gained, or by sore tribulation to be averted, by the practice of dishonest falsehood, or oppression? Of what value to ourselves is our looking forward to eternal happi-

ness, the divine reward annexed to human virtue; if the hour which tries men's souls finds us more anxious to secure our mortal possessions, than resolved to trust our own immortal hopes.

I verily believe that no human or divine authority, neither philosophy nor revelation, can establish in our minds and hearts an abiding faith in the eternity of our being, without the concurrent testimony of experimental self-knowledge. It is by actually trying whether, by the power of a resolute adherence to duty, and a devoted trust in the immortal energies of the soul, we are able to overcome every mortal fear and selfish care for bodily enjoyment and bodily existence, that we can satisfy ourselves as to the inherent power of the mind to exist without this body. He who by patient endurance of tribulation, has gained that profound experience, that practical self-knowledge, which enables him at any time, at the call of duty, to stake that which he knows to be mortal against that which he believes to be immortal; he bears in his inmost soul that blessed hope which maketh not ashamed, that is, which does not deceive. The storms of life cannot extinguish, the floods of death cannot quench, the exhalations of false wisdom cannot obscure the divine light which illumines the inner temple, shining more and more unto the perfect day.

If the time we have lived in this world has in any degree answered the end for which we were sent into it, it must have taught us that tribulation worketh patience; and patience experience; and experience hope, that maketh not ashamed; that is, hope which

does not deceive. And if our past life has not brought us this moral treasure, if tribulation has not made us patient, and if the painful experience growing out of our impatience, has left us without hope in this world, we should not lose a moment in returning, with better intentions, to the stern teacher from whom we have fled, to recommence the study of moral wisdom in the primary school of tribulation. Yea, we should pray God, not for prosperity and ease, but for trial and trouble; or if our own path be free from the sufferings of other men, we should make the sufferings of others our own. This is the school to which Providence sends us to learn patience, to acquire experience, and thus at length, from the bitter root of tribulation, to raise the fair blossom of hope, which makes us forget its dark, earthly origin, in its bright and heavenly promise.

I have set before you, my friends, the blessing which, in the moral government of God, belongs to tribulation, by carrying out the train of moral reasoning pointed out in my text. I will close my discourse with three observations. First, I would lead you once more to consider that patience, experience, and hope, are the moral, not the necessary fruits of tribulation. They stand on the same moral ground with every other blessing promised in the word of God. They cannot be realized, they cannot become ours, against our will, or without it, but solely through our own will. Tribulation worketh patience, that is, tribulation is fitted by Providence to work patience, if we will do our part as fellow-workers with God.

All our hopes in the life to come depend on the fulfilment of present duties. Experience is not only an historical record, but a book of prophecy. A thorough knowledge of what we are, brings foreknowledge of what we shall be; but we know what we are only when we have learned what we can do; and this learning is acquired only by actual doing. In the second place, I would observe that there is a way, a providential arrangement, by which the blessed attainments of patience, experience, and hope are brought within the reach of those who enjoy prosperity, as well as of those who suffer tribulation.

Both prosperity and adversity are fitted, each in its way, to further the moral progress of men; each presents peculiar temptations, and favors peculiar virtues; and thus they both form essential parts of that divine system of education, by which we are to attain to the full stature of perfect men. We are sent to the school of prosperity, that we may learn to overcome the temptation to selfish indulgence, and to become thoroughly versed in the noble employment of being stewards and dispensers of God's bounty to mankind. We are committed to the school of adversity, of tribulation, that we may learn to overcome the temptations to despondency and servile submission, and acquire patience, experience, and hope.

But such is the providential adaptation of all circumstances to the great end of human life, that those who are subjected to the hard school of adversity are at the same time able to acquire the virtues, which grow more easily in the rich soil of prosperity; and

that those whom fortune has favored with a liberal hand, have it in their power also to gain a share in that harvest of inward riches, which may be reaped from the hard soil of adversity. The poor man may dispose of his services, his thoughts and affections, with a high-minded generosity, which makes him, too, a chosen steward of God's bounty to mankind. And the prosperous man, by entering heartily and actively into the trials and privations of the poor, the forsaken, the oppressed, the persecuted, may possess himself of that heroic patience, that philosophic experience, that devout hope, which the Apostle designates as the genuine fruits of tribulation.

But, in the third place, it is not only by sharing the trials of others, that those who are prosperous can secure the blessings held out in our text. They are within the reach of every one, in his own daily walk of life. The words of the Apostle apply directly to him only who suffers tribulation, severe, oppressive affliction; because he needs most deeply that Christian patience and experience that can save him from hopeless dejection. He shows to him, to whom the sun of human happiness sends not a single heart-cheering beam, how by the divine power of virtue, he may cause the night to shine as the day. But it is not only the total absence of joy, the concentration of misery, which calls for the exercise of patience. The most prosperous course of life is full of trials and temptations to impatience.

Although this world is so constituted, that while the light of prosperity shines upon some, others are

left in darkness ; yet every one knows, from his own experience, that it is but a moment that the sun stands right over head, without casting a shadow either before or behind us. A continued struggle with the innumerable and ever-varying trials of life, requires as much patience, and presents as fruitful a field of moral experience, as the most severe tribulation. And he who, amidst a thousand petty vexations, succeeds in possessing his soul in patience, is cheered by that hope which maketh not ashamed, even the hope of the Christian martyr, of being glorified together with him, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross.

SERMON XXXI.

MATTHEW XXVI. 28.

"This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins."

THE remission or forgiveness of sins is a part of the corrective discipline, designed by the Creator for the moral education of man. Remission of sins means remission or removal of the two natural consequences of sin, which are remorse and punishment.

In order to understand the manner in which Jesus redeems men from the consequences of sin, it is necessary to consider how far the character of man, as a moral agent, can be influenced by the act of another being, whether human or divine. It is plain, that man can be responsible for his actions, only so far as these actions are free, that is, truly his own; that he can be deserving of reward or punishment, only so far as his choice between right and wrong is unimpaired. He cannot be made good or bad, virtuous or vicious, against or without his will. As long as he remains a moral and responsible being, all that any other power, human or divine, can do for him, to lead him to repentance and virtue, may be reduced

to these two things ; to make his duty clear to him, and to present to him sufficient motives for its performance. This is the great moral good (the greatest that can be conferred upon a moral agent) which Jesus has brought to man. By his doctrine and by his example, he has set before us the intrinsic excellence and attendant blessedness of virtue ; showing, at the same time, by way of contrast, the intrinsic worthlessness and attendant wretchedness of sin. This is the great lesson, which Jesus taught and exemplified, in his life and by his death, so as to interest and engage every power of the soul, convincing the reason, moving the heart, and quickening the will of man.

We have remission of sin, that is, we are prompted to repentance and to virtue, not only by the death, but by the whole life, and the saving doctrine, of Jesus. He himself says, "He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." And when the Apostle says, that in him we have remission of sin, he indicates, that what Jesus taught, and did, and suffered, is able and sufficient to save all those who are willing to accept the terms of salvation ; those who will do for themselves what no other human being can do for them ; those who not only receive the doctrine of Jesus, but, according to the Apostle's advice, as they "have received Christ Jesus, walk in him, rooted and grounded in him."

The blood of Jesus, his death on the cross, is

more peculiarly and emphatically designed as the great means of salvation, because it is in truth the most important act in the moral life of Jesus. I consider it the most important act, because it required the highest moral effort in Jesus, and, for the same reason, is fitted, as an example, to call forth the greatest moral effort in his disciples.

With a view to secure all the blessings, which the death of Jesus was intended to bestow, let us endeavour to understand the true ground of its moral importance. Jesus says, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." The voluntary sacrifice of life is here represented as the greatest act of love. In another passage, Jesus makes this the test of his being the good Shepherd, that "the good Shepherd giveth his life for his sheep."

The institution of the Lord's Supper was intended to show forth the Lord's death; and thus, in every part of the New Testament, this event is spoken of, sometimes in direct, and sometimes in figurative, language, as the most important part of the history of Jesus. The ignorance of interpreters, and the predisposition of many to see in the death of the Saviour a mysterious something, that excites and carries away the imagination, rather than a glorious example, that requires a like moral effort in his followers, has clothed this event with a factitious and superstitious importance, which must vanish of itself as soon as the true glory of the cross is perceived and appreciated.

The last moments of life are of themselves not more valuable than any that precede them ; and our joys are as important a part of our discipline as our sufferings. Even the fact, that death is voluntary, an act of self-sacrifice, does not, of itself, exalt it in a moral point of view ; otherwise, the death of a suicide would at once transform him into a hero and a martyr. The death of the suicide, when it is not the effect of mental derangement, or a false view of duty, is not an act of courage, but of cowardice, a disgraceful acknowledgment of his inability to bear the trials and hardships of life. Nor does the circumstance, that a man does not himself put an end to his life, but gives himself up to be killed by others, make any material difference in the moral character of the act. The true worth of the voluntary abandonment of life depends on the value of the life that is sacrificed, and the object for which it is given up.

These are the considerations, which constitute the preëminent worth and glory of the death of Jesus, and make it the object of our grateful veneration. For, whether you consider the value of his life, or the greatness of the object for which he sacrificed it, what is there, in the whole range of human experience and history, which does not in comparison sink into insignificance ? For, if the worth of life must be determined by its usefulness, what name is there, that deserves to be mentioned in comparison with that of him, who made his brief existence on earth the means of revealing the being and the character of God, and the nature and destiny of man ; of

laying down the eternal principles of duty, and so exemplifying them, as to serve as a universal standard to all nations and generations of men? Well might he, who knew the whole value of human life, and who possessed it in himself, declare, that "greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Those eyes, whose benignant beams had dried up so many tears; those eyes, that had wept over Jerusalem, must resign their blessed light for ever; those hands, from whose quickening touch powers of healing had gone out; those arms, which were ever open to meet the embrace of little children, must be stretched out on the cross, as if to signify his last desire to embrace all mankind; that voice, through which the oracles of God were made known; that voice, which pronounced blessings on the poor, the afflicted, the persecuted; that voice, which called Lazarus from the tomb, spent its last strength to establish, by its dying accents, a union of parental and filial love between his mother and the disciple whom Jesus loved, and then to commend his spirit into the hands of his Father in heaven.

But it was not only the value of the gift, that Jesus laid upon the altar, which gave to the sacrifice of his life its exalted character; the object, also, the motive, which prompted this last evidence of his love, enhanced the moral importance of his death. The man, who risks his life to protect his wife and children, deserves praise; a higher praise is due to him who gives up both his personal and his family interests for the cause of his country; but the highest

palm of martyrdom belongs to him who sacrifices his patriotism, his family attachments, and his life, for the salvation of mankind. It was in the power of Jesus to save his life by sacrificing his cause; it was in his power to raise the family, from which he descended, once more to the throne of his ancestors. For we cannot suppose, that, when tempted in the wilderness, he saw the kingdoms of the world and their glory before him, the splendid prospect could have tempted him, if it had been beyond his reach. We presume, that it was in the power of Jesus to raise his people to that proud preëminence among the nations, to which their ambition aspired. He used, he sacrified all this power to check the selfish patriotism of his nation, to disappoint the ambitious hopes of his own brothers and of his followers. He washed the feet of his disciples, and expired on the cross, that, by his own example, he might save the world from the most pernicious of errors, and the most dangerous of all temptations. "The kings of the Gentiles," he said, "exercise lordship over them, and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so; but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. I am among you as he that serveth."

To establish a universal brotherhood among men, to make them serve one another in love, Jesus sacrificed his life, and with it all the selfish prospects of personal, domestic, and national glory. But, in order to comprehend the whole import of the death of Jesus,

we must view it not only as a single act in comparison with other events. The death of the Saviour reveals the essential character and meaning of his whole life. All that was mysterious and inexplicable to the disciples themselves in the life of their Master, was made manifest by his death. His death was only the consummation of a whole life of self-sacrifice; and it is by stimulating us to follow out the same principle in our own lives, to devote all our powers, to sacrifice our selfish interests and desires to the temporal and eternal welfare of man, that the example of Jesus saves us from sin and all its consequences.

If we would experience the saving influence of his example, we must look upon the faculties which God has given us, and the means which he has placed within our reach, as Jesus looked upon his own miraculous powers, when tempted in the wilderness to abuse them for his own advantage, for satisfying his hunger, and realizing the most dazzling prospects of presumption and ambition. We must maintain our integrity, our mental and moral independence, against the hurtful influence, the menaces and the allurements of those, on whose favor our temporal safety and well-being depend, even as Jesus maintained his integrity, his mental and moral independence, against the scribes and pharisees, the priests and the rulers of his people.

He who would be saved by the example of Jesus must have moral discernment to perceive, and moral courage to declare, that the mite of the poor widow, — that the offering of him, who, in giving his services, is

casting all he has into the treasury of human happiness, is a richer gift, than the richest offerings of abundance. He must respect and honor human nature, the likeness of the living God, even in the most abject and degraded of his fellow-beings, and, like his divine Master, strive to seek and save that which was lost. He must rejoice with the joyful, and weep with those who mourn; equally prompt to relieve the distress of a starving multitude, and to increase the innocent pleasure of the guests at a wedding. While he honors the noble toil of the patriot and the philanthropist, he must also honor the faithful service of the hired laborer. While he glorifies the man who pours out his blood for the good of mankind, he must give credit to him who offers a cup of cold water only to allay the thirst of a single human being. He must bless them that curse him, and do good to them that hate him. He must be not only generous, but just, toward his enemies; even as Jesus gave the most convincing proof, not only of his forgiving love, but of his heart-searching justice, in praying God to forgive his murderers, because they knew not what they did.

I have shown in what manner Jesus procures for us remission of sins. His death, when it is considered as the consummation of the whole purpose of his life, as well as the most impressive illustration of his doctrine, presents all that a moral agent needs; the convincing principle, the encouraging example, the inspiring motive, that should induce him to avoid sin, and, if he be guilty of sin, to repent and return

to the path of righteousness and peace. For the hardened offender, Christianity has terrors sufficient to rouse the torpid conscience. For the timid novice in the service of sin, it has gentler notes of reproving and forgiving love to start the warm tears of repentance. One look, one look of tender reproof and pity, was sufficient to convince Peter, that, in denying his Master, he had wounded his own heart; and "he went out and wept bitterly."

I have said, that we are saved from punishment as soon as we truly repent of our sins. It is true, our repentance does not always remove the suffering which is the consequence of our transgression. But, as soon as we truly repent, this suffering loses its bitterest sting; it ceases to be punishment. We know that the perfection of the moral character requires the endurance of undeserved, as well as of deserved, suffering. Jesus, in whom there was no sin, was made perfect through suffering. Death on the cross must have been a very different death to the malefactor, who, in deriding Jesus, expressed his fiendish joy at seeing the virtuous condemned to the same agony with himself, and to his fellow-criminal and fellow-sufferer, who, having acknowledged the justice of his punishment as the reward of his crime, died with forgiveness in his heart, and the hope of glory to sustain his spirit. The impenitent sinner shrinks from his just punishment; the penitent sinner willingly embraces it as a proof of the sincerity of his sorrow.

I have said, also, that remorse and repentance cease, as soon as the love of virtue has become

supreme in his penitent heart. The sinner can never cease to regret what he has done, but as soon as repentance has had its perfect work, he looks upon his past sins as he looks upon those of others; because the sinful state of his heart, from which they proceeded, has passed away. Regret remains, but remorse ceases; even as the wound that is caused by the arrow, remains, after the lips of a friend have drawn out the fatal poison.

We are all sinners; we all stand in need of the corrective justice and redeeming love of our God. There is, indeed, a balm in Gilead, and there is a physician. But unless we confess ourselves sick, or unless we apply and submit to the true physician, we cannot be healed. O let us not, with treasonable cowardice, shrink from his painful, but salutary appliances, and trust our recovery to the flattering ointments, the deceitful quackery, of the world. The traveller in the snow, overcome by cold and fatigue, desires no greater felicity, than to lie down and sleep. Who, then, is a true friend to him, who, deceived by the fatal attractions of sleep, is throwing himself into the open arms of death, — the man who shows him a place where he may lay his weary head, and covers him over with garments; or the man, who, by incessant, painful excitement and seeming cruelty, urges him on to irksome, yet saving effort? My friends, what now is our choice? The fatal repose, or the quickening pain? Pleasures of life, which are the earnest of death; or pains of death, which are the tokens of returning life? Sin with remorse, or sin without remorse?

The blood of Jesus is shed for many, that is, for all those who are truly desirous of being cleansed from their sins. We are saved from sin and all its consequences, by the death of Jesus, if, moved by his example, we die daily to the charms of sinful desire, and the temptations that most easily beset us. We are saved by the cross of Christ, if, moved by his example, we deny and crucify our vain and ambitious strivings and passions. We are saved by the blood of the Son of God, if, moved by his example, we stand ready to sacrifice our earthly interests, and pour out all our treasure, and, if needs be, our blood, for the good of mankind.

SERMON XXXII.

MATTHEW v. 8.

"Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God."

LET us inquire, first, who they are whom the Saviour here calls blessed; and then, in what that blessing consists, which is promised to the pure in heart.

A man is pure, in the eye of the law, if he abstains from injuring his neighbour in his property, life, honor, and liberty; and such a man has a right to be protected by the law in his liberty and honor, his life, and his property. But a man may be justified in the eye of the law, and be entitled to its protection, and yet fall short of the standard of excellence held up by public opinion. By public opinion I mean that sense of propriety which is generally found in the majority of the members of every community, and which may well be called the conscience of society. This public sentiment is ever active in forming an average judgment of every action that falls under its jurisdiction; and its jurisdiction extends to the most minute as well as to the essential parts of human conduct; to our dress, our conversation, our appearance at home and abroad, our manners, as well as our

morals. A man is pure in the opinion of the world, in the sound and enlightened sentiment of his fellow-men, if, in every eye that is turned upon him in his private and public walk, you may read the sentence, "I find no fault in him." Although the popularity of men and of measures, particularly in a free community, be subject to frequent changes, yet the moral credit of a man, in the long run, is founded on his whole conduct bearing testimony to his sincere desire to perform the duties of his station, whatever it be. It is this practical evidence of a sincere desire to avail himself of all the means of excellence, whether great or small, which circumstances have placed within the reach of an individual, which, in the opinion of those whose esteem is worth obtaining, forms the only basis of true respectability, for the poor as well as for the rich, for the ignorant and weak, as well as for the learned and powerful. A person, therefore, may deserve the protection of the law, and nevertheless not enjoy the public esteem and sympathy, because his conduct does not come up to the high mark of excellence required by public opinion.

But although we duly prize the conduct and the condition of a man who satisfies both the law and the public mind, it is nevertheless true, that a man may be pure in the eye of the law, and in the opinion of men, and yet stand convicted in the sight of a higher tribunal, and be unworthy and incapable of true and perfect happiness. When a certain ruler asked Jesus, "What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" that is, eternal happiness, he said unto

him, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments; thou shalt do no murder; thou shalt not commit adultery; thou shalt not steal; thou shall not bear false witness; honor thy father and thy mother; and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Then the young man said unto him, "All these things have I kept from my youth up; what lack I yet?" Jesus said unto him, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow me." "But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions." Then that saying of Jesus was verified, "Where your treasure is, there shall your heart be also." This man had done all that the law and the moral judgment of his fellow-men required of him, and was fairly entitled to all the benefits of the law and the esteem of his fellow-citizens. Yet there was within himself a source of dissatisfaction, which prompted him to ask Jesus what he lacked yet to be perfect, — and which made him shrink back, when the unerring probe of the Searcher of hearts touched the sore spot in his moral frame. He would gladly have obeyed the voice of him who said to him, "Follow me," if he could have enlisted in the service of God without abjuring that of mammon. What he lacked yet, lay not in his conduct, but in the root of all human conduct; he could not be perfectly happy, he could not see God, because his heart was not perfectly pure, that is, not free from those selfish and earthly interests, which so contract the mental sight, that it mistakes the nearest

enjoyment for the greatest. Purity of heart, then, consists in the freedom of the soul from every motive except that one which alone is conducive to supreme and everlasting happiness, the love of God and man. The pure in heart, of whom Jesus speaks in our text, are those in whom that divine principle prevails over every selfish and earthly desire; those in whom the holy flame of love which God has enkindled in every bosom, rises freely to him from whom it proceeded, and gives light and warmth to every kindred being.

Our heart is impure as soon as we allow ourselves to be led away by the prospect or enjoyment of nearer pleasure from the pursuit of the highest good, that is, the greatest happiness of which we are capable. God wills that every human being should possess or obtain as much happiness as human nature is capable of enjoying. Therefore, he commands us by the voice of conscience, to shun such pleasures as would unfit us for the enjoyment of greater blessings; not because those gratifications are in themselves impure, and contrary to the will of God, but only so far as they are inconsistent with the highest happiness for which we were created. A numberless variety of enjoyments are implied in the possession of life, health, and property, of domestic, civil, and religious institutions. All these various sources of happiness, being the gifts of God, are in themselves pure and good. But our reason tells us that some of these are of more worth than others, that is, more conducive to true and lasting satisfaction; and whenever these pleasures come in collision with meaner gratifications, our conscience

bids us sacrifice the latter, because we shall be happier to resign than to enjoy them. In the case of the ruler, Jesus did not reprehend him for having enjoyed his wealth, but because, when he saw an opportunity of acquiring treasures in heaven by sacrificing his earthly riches, he preferred a meaner enjoyment to the highest of which man is capable. Thus, to use a familiar illustration, it is natural for every one to desire such food as he likes best; but if those things which he relishes most, are injurious to his health, his reason tells him that the preservation of his health yields more satisfaction than the gratification of his palate. And if he has a sick friend who depends on his care, his conscience prompts him to expose his health to save the life of his friend, this being a source of greater happiness to him than his health. And if the cause of freedom and religion should demand even the sacrifice of his life, the oracle of God in his own breast tells him that the best joys of life, and life itself, are as nothing compared with the happiness of a free death in the cause of God and man. In all these instances, the nature of moral purity and impurity is evident. The gratification of the palate to the injury of our health; the narrow-hearted anxiety to preserve our health or our life, when the life of a friend or the cause of truth is at stake; those meaner gratifications stain the moral character, that garment of holiness, which becomes the children of light, and fits them for the blessings promised in our text, that the pure in heart shall behold the Father of light, the God of infinite purity. It is, then, evident that

purity of heart, or freedom from all debasing and contaminating desires, belongs only to a mind which is intent upon its truest happiness, excluding every enjoyment that proves a drawback to the pursuit of the highest good.

In speaking of purity of heart, it is necessary to distinguish between that natural purity, which is the attribute of infancy, and moral purity, the effect of virtue. In childhood, as long and as far as the child is unable to discern and choose between good and evil, nature itself directs him in the right way to perfection and happiness. While in later periods of his life, we see his animal and spiritual desires, his earthly and heavenly interests, at war with each other; we behold all the various elements and tendencies of his nature existing, and working together in peaceful harmony in the child. Human nature, which in after life appears as a kingdom divided against itself, exhibits in infancy the living image of the kingdom of heaven within us. We read in Scripture, that in the beginning of the world, when God had created man in his own image, he blessed the work of his hands, and placed our first parents in paradise, which they might have retained through virtue, as they forfeited it by sin. And when the Son of God took little children in his arms and blessed them, saying, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven," he declared that the image of God was still in man; and this saying alone would be sufficient to convince us that the Creator and preserver of human nature has secured to the individual the original privilege of the human race, that the morn-

ing of his life should be a paradise of the heart, which he may preserve by virtue, or forfeit by sin.

Yet one deep injury to the whole human race grew out of the first transgression ; it was the first example of sin, of disobedience to the law of God. This first instance of sin in a sinless world, although it could not unfit man for moral purity, must have operated with peculiar force in the primitive ages of the world, when the conduct of the parents had a much greater power over the character of children and children's children, as it was not yet counteracted and modified by public education, and all the various influences of civilized life. But the baneful influence of this first example of sin upon the human family, has been done away by an example of perfect virtue. The son of man was, like the first man, tempted to transgress the law of God ; but he triumphed over temptation. In his life and his death, the man Jesus has exhibited to mankind an example of human perfection, and thereby created a moral power sufficient to save us from the influence of every example of sin ; thus leaving us no excuse for falling short of the standard of moral purity and excellence which he has set before us for our imitation.

Truly, if man were incapable of moral purity, — if some were necessarily destined for virtue and happiness, and others for sin and misery, then all the admonitions of the Bible to do the will of God, to imitate Christ, to be perfect even as our Father in heaven is perfect, — all those holy injunctions would

be senseless. For, those who are predestined to misery are unable to follow them, while they are superfluous for those who are created to be happy. Likewise, the revelation of the will of God through the voice of our own conscience, would be absurd or unjust, if our conscience commanded us to do what we were unable to perform. Whatever strange theories men may invent to persuade themselves that they are incapable of doing what they ought to do, their own conscience gives the lie to every pretence by which they evade the uncompromising demands of duty. It depends on the will of each individual, on his own free exertion, to preserve that purity of heart, which the God of nature has implanted in the child; and to restore it, if it has been sullied by sin. The denial of this great doctrine of Scripture and of conscience, that "the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father," nor be justified by his father's righteousness; the idea of a propagation, a hereditary transmission of virtue or of sin from generation to generation; the belief in the total depravity of the human race, caused by one sinful act of its progenitor, seems to me the most injurious form of materialism; for this doctrine undermines the foundation of individual moral responsibility, which necessarily supposes the freedom of the individual to choose between good and evil. Hence a moral agent who is responsible for his good or evil conduct, because he himself is the author of it, so long as he retains his free agency, can receive from any other being no greater injury than the seductive

example of sin; and no blessing so great as the inspiring example of perfect virtue. Many, indeed, and powerful, are the temptations besetting us in every path of life. Wherever we may be, we are forced to behold the triumphs of cunning over justice and simplicity, apparently defeating and reversing the moral government of God. Yet all the temptations of this world, all the charms and terrors of evil, are not able to overcome the determination of a man, nay, of the weakest woman, rather to die than to do wrong. And, on the other hand, many and powerful are the aids which a kind Providence has given for guarding us from moral evil; such as the recollection of our innocence in childhood, the monitions of conscience to preserve it, and the example of virtuous men, particularly the unexampled virtue of Jesus. But these moral aids, instead of superseding our own exertions, only increase our responsibility.

It is said, "the heart is deceitful above all things"; it is capable, we know, of an endless variety of devices and ways, by which men may deceive the world, and endeavour to deceive themselves, as to the true motives of their actions. Cowardice and sloth may shelter themselves under the pretence of imperious necessity; and ambition may act the part of patriotism and philanthropy. There may be instances in which the innocent appear guilty to all the world, and the criminal is revered as a saint. The judgment of the world is a light which shines on the surface of our being, our outward conduct, without penetrating to the root. The heart itself, the

heart of each individual, is the only human witness and competent judge of its own purity; and no one is able to try its testimony and judgment, except the Searcher of all hearts. The mote that is hardly perceptible to the eye, will dim and painfully affect the sight if it enters the tender organ; so the eye of the soul, the heart, is troubled and pained by the faintest tendency to unholy thoughts and intentions. Nature and revelation bear witness, that our heart was destined by its Creator to be a temple of holiness and heavenly love. Therefore, the fire of holy indignation, the spirit of Christ, is kindled in our souls whenever we allow selfish desires and interests to enter and profane the house of God within us. Conscience is the pulse of the soul, and immortal as the soul. However successful we may be in hiding our guilt from the eyes of the world, and even in deceiving ourselves for a time, the light of conscience can never be entirely extinguished. For, the same light which illumines and cheers the path of the righteous, breaks at last, like lightning, through the artificial night in which the sinner seeks to hide his guilt from the world and from himself. And, on the contrary, when the storm of affliction gathers round the just man, and destroys all his earthly possessions and hopes, his heart rejoices in the consciousness of its own purity, spreading a bow of heavenly peace over the darkest clouds of misfortune. Our conscience, the incorruptible interpreter of the will of God within us, chides us for the slightest mixture of selfishness with our best endeavours and attainments; while it rewards us

with heavenly joy for every resignation of self in the most humble as well as in the highest concerns of man.

"Blessed are the pure in heart;" this is a precious saying to all, but more especially to the young. In the spring-time of life, while the morning dew of innocence is fresh upon the soul, — while the heart feels so rich in its native treasures, and fancies them inexhaustible, and would not exchange them for all the shining wealth which the cupidity of man has conjured up from the depths of the earth and of the sea, — then is the time to consider the condition on which the possession of these inward riches depends. Yes, the golden dream of youth, exulting in the fancied possession of unbounded wealth, is not an illusion, but a reality. Yes, my young friend, the unfathomed mines of faith, hope, and love, which lie embedded in the innermost parts of your being, are inexhaustible; and you are the legitimate heir, the rightful possessor of all this wealth. The crown of life is yours as long as you retain one jewel, the worth of which far exceeds every other possession, even the crown diamond of the kingdom of heaven. Hope, faith, and love, the angels of God, are ready to minister to him who resists the attacks, and spurns the golden promises of the tempter; who resolutely and gladly foregoes the kingdoms of this world with all their glory, content to have for his portion nought but the blessing which God has reserved for the *pure in heart.* "Rejoice," then, we would say with the preacher, "rejoice, O young man, in thy youth!" Fear not to take the full

cup of earthly joy, if it be consecrated by that divine blessing. But if thy heart be not pure, the wine of the altar shall turn into poison, and thou shalt drink condemnation from the cup of life. The light of the soul is the heart; "if, therefore, the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!"

I have said that among the beatitudes revealed in the Sermon on the Mount, purity of heart holds out peculiar charms to the young. They are attracted by the superior charms of moral beauty, even the beauty of holiness, which is but another name for purity of heart. But the transcendent beauty of goodness is felt not only by the young. The heart never grows old. Purity of heart is not an acquired habit, a mere vestment of the soul that belongs to any particular season of life; it is the soul itself in its native simplicity. It makes the full-grown man receive the kingdom of heaven as a little child; it makes old age the beginning of celestial childhood.

Blessed, therefore, blessed indeed are the pure in heart; and the principal cause of this blessedness is expressed in the last words of our Saviour's declaration, "they shall see God." Do you ask, my friends, what is meant by these words? The silent lake, undisturbed by the winds, and unsullied by storms and torrents, reflects the sun, and all the starry hosts of heaven; thus the heart, undisturbed by the vanities of this world, and unsullied by selfish passions, reflects, in its deep and silent mirror, the spiritual world, and the Father of spirits. The pure in heart alone are able to see God in nature and in man. While the

selfish and impure mind sees in nature nothing but a mass of things which have no worth to him but in exact proportion as they serve more or less to gratify his appetites and promote his earthly interests, the pure in heart rejoice in discovering in the shell on the sea-shore, and in the wild flower, as in the mighty ocean and the starry fields of heaven, in the whole and in each particle of this immense system of worlds, the traces of divine perfection. Still more, the pure in heart alone have eyes to see what is divine in man. A great knowledge of the world, and familiar acquaintance with its conceits and vanities, may enable a man to scan and trace in the actions of others every selfish motive, however concealed. And this penetration of a man of the world in descrying the faults of others, may be improved by his own experience in depravity. And yet, all his sagacity may not enable him fully to conceive and appreciate one disinterested action, one deed of true kindness, however simple. Singleness of heart is revealed only to the single-hearted. He alone, who, amidst the false splendor and the spoiled judgment of the world, has preserved the clear eye of childhood, is able to see God in man; to see him in the ready frankness and loving confidence of the child, in the devoted parent, in every act of self-denial and kindness, in every virtuous effort and pious emotion, in every feature of the human character, which shows forth the divine original in whose image we are created.

But the pure in heart see God not only in his creation, in nature and in man; they already begin to

enjoy a more intimate perception of God himself. When the soul, absorbed in devotion, dies to the cares and pleasures of this world, to live to God alone, — in these blessed moments of holy communion, the deepest chords of our being begin to vibrate and resound with the breathings of the Spirit whose breath first called us into being. It is then that we think, and realize the thought, that the soul of man is made to be a temple of the Lord, and that the Lord is in his temple. Although the eye of our mind is yet too weak to fix itself steadily upon the sun of the spiritual world, yet we have a glimpse, a blessed anticipation of that perfect vision, when we shall see him face to face, and know him even as we are known.

I have endeavoured to show you, my friends, what purity of heart is, and in what that blessing consists, which the Preacher on the mount has pronounced upon the pure in heart. I have shown, also, that God, who, through the voice of his Son, has promised to the pure in heart that they shall see him, has given to each one of us the power to keep the eye of the mind pure, that it may behold the God of infinite purity. It is in our power "to keep ourselves unspotted from the world;" to fortify our souls against the alluring influence of those enjoyments which unfit us for true happiness; to have, at all times, "a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men." Then let us listen to the guardian angel within us; let us obey the faithful intimations of conscience. Conscience is the eyelid which God has placed over the eye of the soul to guard its holy crystal from impurity.

May those who are conscious of unholy desires, consider that they must soon appear in the presence of Him whose eyes are too pure to behold iniquity; — nay, that they stand in his presence now, convicted and condemned by their own conscience. Cease, then, to do evil; learn to do well. Pray that the fear of God may come upon you, to turn your souls from sin and misery. Pray that your fear, which is the "beginning of wisdom," may lead you on, till it give place, at length, to that nobler and holier principle which "casteth out fear," — that principle, which the disciple whom Jesus loved has declared to be the characteristic of the children of God. "Every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for GOD IS LOVE."

SERMON XXXIII.

JOHN VIII. 51.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death."

THE Jews, in whose presence Jesus uttered these words, were greatly offended at them. "Now we know," they said, "that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead; and thou sayest, 'If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death.' Art thou greater than our father Abraham and the prophets?"

Some interpreters of holy writ seem to have been startled by these words of Jesus, almost as much as those to whom they were first addressed. Neither Abraham, nor the prophets, nor Jesus himself, were exempted from death; and all those who have kept his sayings, as well as those who have lived in defiance of them, have equally seen and tasted death. It has been supposed, therefore, that Jesus meant by death, not what the Jews whom he addressed, and what men generally understand by it, the extinction of life; but that he used the word figuratively, to denote the punishment, the misery, which awaits the wicked after death, and from which, those who keep the sayings of Jesus, the commandments of God, are

saved. But this explanation, according to which Jesus meant to express no more than this, that those who keep his sayings, that good men, should not suffer the punishments of the wicked, this explanation makes Jesus say something that is true indeed, but something that is so obviously true, that it seems as if it need not to have been said at all.

The words which Jesus used were evidently intended to rouse the dull minds of his hearers to the highest pitch of attention and intense reflection, by an assertion, which, in its obvious meaning, seemed to contradict all their experience and knowledge.

When Jesus assured the Jews, that those who kept his sayings should not see death, they understood him to say, simply, that those, who embraced his doctrine and precepts, should not die or cease to live. But the higher intention of Jesus of stimulating their minds to pass beyond the literal sense of his words, and to enter upon their true spiritual meaning, failed through the obstinate stupidity of his hearers. The Jews revolted at the words which were intended to save them, and accused him, who had spoken them, of being impelled by the evil spirit.

A sincere attempt at seeing the simple truth, across an apparent contradiction, would have shown them, and a similar effort of mind will show us, my friends, that the true Christian, though he see death, does not see it as other men do. We know there are cases, in which things, that seem the same, may in truth be very different to different persons.

If you ask a selfish child to give up a part of his bread to another; or if you ask a selfish man to give up a part of his income to feed the poor, or to instruct the ignorant, the selfish possessor will see in the thing, which is demanded of him, only a privation, an injury to himself; while a generous mind will thank you for having afforded it an occasion for exercising the highest privilege of man, an opportunity of doing good to his brother.

Thus, the solemn event of death, which to the unbeliever and the sensualist, is the termination of life and of all human enjoyment, is, to the Christian, not the end of all things, but the beginning of an endless course of ever increasing happiness. He, too, must see the night, but he sees the stars of eternity breaking through the night. He, too, must pass through the dark valley, but he enters it joyfully; because he knows whither he goes, and he knows the way.

It is true, then, as the Apostle says, that Jesus "hath abolished death." He has taken from it its sting, nay its reality, by the very fact, that he has brought life and immortality to light. But, in order to understand and fully to appreciate this great truth, it is not sufficient, that we make it a subject of inquiry, weighing every argument until we have satisfied our understanding. Of all the truths, which God has revealed to man, there is none, to which the words of Jesus, that, "If a man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine," are more strictly applicable, than the doctrine of immortality. Only he, who keeps the commandments of God, only the virtuous man enjoys

the fulness of that blessing, only he can hope to see the glorious prediction fulfilled in himself. "If a man keep my saying he shall never see death." Both nature and Scripture furnish the most convincing proofs of man's immortality. That deep longing after endless existence and infinite progress, implanted in the soul of man; the nature of the human intellect, that strives to encompass all things on earth and in heaven; the nature of our affections, by which we are prompted to hold fast, in indissoluble embrace, every object of our love, and continually to extend our interest to all that is good and beautiful in this world, to rise in adoration, and cling, with child-like trust, to the Creator of all worlds, the Father of our spirits; still more, the moral power with which we are endowed, by which we can conquer every temptation;—all these glorious attributes of the human mind, afford, if not absolute evidence, at least as strong a presumption as the nature of things can furnish, of the fitness and destination of man for immortality. And if we add to all this the testimony of him who brought immortality to light, not only in his doctrine, but by the example of his own resurrection, we are naturally led to expect, that a calm, unwavering, and inspiring trust in the eternity of his own moral and spiritual existence, will pervade the mind and life of every disciple of Jesus.

But this natural and rational supposition finds but a slender support in actual experience, which is, after all, the great test of all our calculations. When we see, in the Christian world, even among those, whose

profession of faith we have no right to accuse of hypocrisy, so much shrinking from every sacrifice of the perishable earthly possessions of life, health, property, inclination, pride, resentment, and envy, at the sacred altar of truth, justice, and love; and when we, on the other hand, see so much bartering of immortal treasures, of friendship, honor, and peace of mind, for sordid wealth and short-lived vanity, we are strongly tempted to look upon the belief of men in a life and a judgment to come, as a mere day-dream, that may only engage the leisure moments of a life, whose waking hours belong to what are thought to be realities, to the great business of acquiring wealth, distinction, and influence in society.

The truth is, that our belief in the immortality of the soul remains a matter of speculation, without value, until we begin to act upon this principle, until, by controlling our earth-born passions, and sacrificing our selfish and worldly desires, we have learned, from actual experience, that the mind, the moral principle within us, can indeed exist without the body, independent of the patronage of fortune, and all the precarious supports of human life and happiness. He, who has allowed the perishable interests of this life, his earthly desires, to engross and control all the powers and aspirations of his soul, can have but a feeble reliance on its immortality. He, who has tried the immortal energies of his nature, by subduing his mortal passions, by subjecting both the love of life and the fear of death to the dictates of his own conscience, his faith is no longer a

matter of speculation, but of experience; he has become conscious of a principle within him, that is superior to all the destructive influences of this world; he has entered upon his eternal state; he can "never see death."

Thus, a virtuous life proves the best preparation for death, and the most satisfactory assurance of immortality, both to him who is awaiting the summons of his God, and to those, who, in their sorrow for his loss, seek relief and encouragement in the memory of his example. The death of a just man, whether the fame of his actions fill the whole world, or be confined to his own family and immediate neighbourhood, whether he be called away in the morning of life, or in the strength of manhood, or in the weakness of old age, becomes, to all who know him, a new bond of union with the invisible world. I was lately called to visit a family, sorrowing over the death of a just man, who had been their guide and their support. I knew the man. His character, although not free from human imperfection, was marked by some traits that were proof against all the corrupting influences of this world. He was kind and charitable, when he saw no prospect of kindness in return, and when there was no one to witness his actions, but He who seeth in secret. He was just in all his dealings, and would rather suffer, than do any wrong. He was true in all his words, and would rather lose his life, than save it by a falsehood. He was humble, grateful, and pious, without ostentation. He acted out what he professed; he professed no more than he

believed; he believed only what his own reason had taught him to be true. The loss of such a man, however great and painful to his own friends and to the community, is more than compensated by the memory of his life.

All worldly pursuits bear upon them the mark of death. Every virtuous pursuit admits of endless progress, and cannot be completed in this world. You may extend your property all over the earth, and your dominion over all mankind; yet your greatness is confined to this earth, and to the short time of your existence upon it. The proud conqueror of this world weeps in vain for other worlds to conquer. But all our moral endeavours, the desire of self-improvement, and the love of doing good, know no end. An endless course is laid out before us, in which the smallest step we take brings with it its reward, and in which the highest attainments that we can make, open before us a prospect of new victories to be won, and higher glories to be obtained. Our riches, our worldly distinctions, are but the costly and perishable grave-clothes of our earthly existence. The virtues with which we are clothed are the garments of holiness, which adorn the children of light, and procure their admission to the presence of their God.

It is the spirit of self-sacrifice, the power and the readiness to give up our earthly possessions and pleasures for moral blessings and spiritual treasures, which constitutes the essence of human virtue and the foundation of immortal hopes. It is this spirit, whether displayed in great deeds of patriotism and

philanthropy, or in the performance of the smallest duties, which exalts and sanctifies every action. The humble endeavours of the devoted Christian, who, by the habitual resignation of his own pleasures, strives to make every moment of his existence a blessing to every one around him, the performance of the meanest service, when prompted by the self-sacrificing spirit of love, are full of immortality.

The belief of immortality depends on virtue. He only, who, by virtuous exertion, is striving to overcome the world, can be a true believer in immortality; ay, he cannot be an unbeliever. He praises God for having brought life and immortality to light through his Son. He praises him for having implanted the fear of death in his mortal nature, that, by overcoming it, he may render himself worthy of immortal life. Jesus always represents the conviction of immortality in the good man as a fact. He has the certainty of eternal life in the consciousness of his own spiritual elevation over his natural life or animal nature.

My friends! he, who enters the service of duty, does not enter a thankless service. Duty is, indeed, a rewarder of those who diligently seek her. But her rewards are different from all other rewards. The man, who strives after wealth, honor, power, or pleasure, if he attains what he aims at, finds his reward, not only in the direct object of his wishes, but also in being able, in proportion as he is successful, to cease from effort and toil. He enjoys his wealth, honor, power, or pleasure, all the more, because he

may dispense with the hardships by which he gained them. But the rewards of duty are not rest from labor, but greater tasks, more arduous, hazardous, unachieved, and unconceived-of undertakings. She grants, indeed, moments, precious moments of well-deserved ease; but only moments, like the shutting of the eyelid, to clear the eye, and fit it for more intense, penetrating, and comprehensive vision. Then let him, who has attained moral strength and moral glory, rejoice in his attainments. But let him not rest satisfied. For the perfection of virtue and of happiness does not consist in the strength and the glory we have attained, but in going on for ever from strength to strength, and from glory to glory.

EXTRACT FROM AN UNFINISHED SERMON.

MATTHEW II. 18.

"In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation and weeping, and great mourning; Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not."

RACHEL would not be comforted, because "they are not"; — what power, what eloquence of grief is compressed in this brief description of the mother of Israel, weeping over the loss of her children. The simple expression that the childless mother would not be comforted, contains a revelation of the deep things of the heart, which he only may fully understand, who has dwelled not merely in the outer courts, but in the very sanctuary of sorrow. With the same fond devotion with which she was wont to press to her bosom her living children, the childless mother cherishes and nurses in her inmost heart the unutterable grief which they have left her. If she could, she would not part with it; if she could, she would not be comforted, because they whose existence was sufficient to make the most wretched life a blessing to her, — "they are not."

Let no one attempt to violate the sanctity of parental sorrow by vain proffers of empty comfort and con-

solation! The heart knoweth its own bitterness; and every great sorrow has its mission to fulfil, and claims, as by divine right, a temporary control over the soul. When my hour of sorrow has come, shall I say, "Father, save me from this hour"? O no! "Father, not my will, but thine be done."

"Because they are not,"—this is the simple philosophy, this the ever recurring burden, this the last word of the heart mourning over departed friends. We are sad and disconsolate, because our eyes that saw them, our lips that blessed them, our arms that embraced them, shall see, and bless, and embrace them no more. Are not these, are not all our causes of sorrow for departed friends contained in this one, that "they are not"?

In the Gospel of Matthew, where the words of my text are found, they serve to describe the "lamentation, weeping, and great mourning" of Hebrew mothers, caused by the murder of the children of Bethlehem, by the command of king Herod. The words themselves are a quotation from the prophet Jeremiah, who uses them to set forth the great mourning in Israel, caused by the people being carried into captivity. The prophet says, "A voice was heard in Rama." This was a city belonging to the tribe of Benjamin, through which the unhappy exiles passed, on their way to their distant place of banishment. The prophet speaks of Rachel weeping for her children. Rachel, the ancestral mother of the tribe of Benjamin, stands here as the representative of the mothers of Israel, lamenting because their chil-

dren were forced by their enemies from their native land, to destroy their last hope of salvation. The words are then applied with peculiar force, in the Gospel of Matthew, to the children of Bethlehem, who were murdered by Herod, for the purpose of destroying with them the expected Saviour of Israel. The same expressions are in a wider sense applicable to every case of mourning, caused by the hand of death seizing those whom we love best in this world, and carrying them into what to the unbeliever appears an eternal exile. The heart, intent only upon its present bereavement, which is rendered more painful by the recollection of past joy, — the heart that feels at home only in its own solitary grief, "will not be comforted, because they are not." But as the prophet's description of the great mourning in Israel is applicable to every family, to every circle of friends that has been broken in upon by death, so the words of comfort which he addressed to the desponding exiles, are precious to every sorrowing heart. "Thus saith the Lord; Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears. There is hope in thine end."

Many cases of human suffering seem indeed hopeless; but there is hope in the end. Blessed be God, who sent into the world the Prophet of prophets, whose voice now enters every house of mourning, bidding those who are weeping for departed friends, and who would not be comforted because they are not, to refrain from tears, and rejoice in the blessed assurance that they are. That which was the comfort of Israel in exile, is the saving hope of every

mourner on earth; even the hope of restoration and reunion in our eternal home.

There is not one amongst us, my friends, in whose faithful memory the words of my text have not raised the well-known form of some intimate friend that sleeps in Jesus. For the dead we have always with us, being enshrined in our hearts; so that when we say the places that once knew them, know them no more, we except one place that is consecrated for ever to their blessed remembrance. Now the truth and the lesson that I would impress upon every heart is chiefly this, that we should learn to think of our departed friends not as objects that have been and have ceased to be; but to live in the faith that they are and ever will be essentially the same beings, carrying with them into another state of existence the same nature, the same character, the same undying love. For there is a meaning in those words of the rich man, whom Jesus, in the parable of Lazarus the beggar, represents as forgetting for a while his own torments in his tender concern for the five brothers he had left behind in his father's house. If such affection be found in hell, can it be wanting in heaven? So strong was the conviction of the immortality of our affections on the mind of Jesus, that when he was preparing his disciples for his own approaching death, he not only told them, that after a little while they should see him, and that wherever he was they should be also; but when they were taking their last meal together, he said, "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

It was not the fruit of the vine that ripened in the valley of Sorek, or on the hills of Gilead, of which the Saviour promised to partake anew with his friends in his Father's kingdom; it was the cup of pure affection passing from heart to heart, which is the true wine of communion in the upper as in the lower temple. This is the feeling which should enter into all our thoughts of departed friends; this is the feeling with which we should look upon them while they are with us. It is the conviction of the immortality of our affections that enables us to look upon the dead and the dying with the same calm assurance with which we take leave, or await the return, of a friend, who leaves us in the morning to return to us before night. We are equally certain that when we meet we shall know each other again; we are more certain that we shall meet. For while we are waiting for our returning friend, before night the swift foot of death may overtake him on his way. But when the evening of all days has come, the way that leads to the house of our common Father, the great highway of all nations and generations of men, is safe and well known to those who have learned to walk by faith.

We do not know, while we are able to enjoy the presence of our deceased friends only in our own fond remembrance, whether they themselves are permitted to be near us, as the unseen witnesses of every action, every word, every thought of ours. It may be, that they, in another state of existence, are subjected to the same discipline of separation in which we are to pass the remainder of our days on earth. But what-

ever be the ordination of Providence with regard to the souls of the departed, the use of the discipline to which the living are subjected, is certain and clear. It is good for the child, now and then, to be absent from his parents, if it were for no other reason than than that it may learn from its own experience, that true affection does not depend on the bodily presence of our friends. Temporary separation is the test which the refiner of our hearts employs to separate true from false affection. The fiery trial that purifies the genuine, consumes the spurious ore. A friendship that cannot endure the trials of separation to which it is exposed in this life, cannot be expected to go with us into eternity. It is true, the pain of separation is great in proportion to the greatness of our love; but it is equally true, that with the growth of our affection increases our faith also in its constancy, and, consequently, our strength to endure the pain. It is the consciousness of a power within us that enables us to lay down even our lives for our friends, which converts our hope of the immortality of our affections into a faith that is all but vision. This faith is the foundation of true Christian friendship. Those whose hearts are bound together in this faith, when the hour of separation comes, though one of them may have the prospect of a long life, with its various trials before him, while the other stands in the very sight of death, are able to take leave of each other with the joyful assurance, — it is but a little while, — and we shall see each other face to face, — to separate no more.

END OF VOL. II.

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